Detective fiction in Cuban society and culture.

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Detective Fiction in Cuban Society and Culture

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A thesis submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London

February 2000

Abstract

The object of this thesis is to reach towards an understanding of Cuban society through a study of its detective fiction and more particularly contemporary Cuban society through the novels of the author and critic, Leonardo Padura Fuentes.

The method has been to trace the development of Cuban detective writing and to read Padura Fuentes in the light of the work of twentieth century Western European literary critics and philosophers including Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, Terry Eagleton, Roland Barthes, Jean Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Jean François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard in order to gain a better understanding of the social and historical context from which this genre emerged.

By concentrating on the literary texts, I have explored readings which lead out into an analysis of the broader philosophical, political and historical issues raised by the Cuban revolution. Since it deals primarily with modes of deviance and notions of legality and justice within the context of the modern state, detective fiction is particularly well suited to this type of investigation. The intention is to show how this is as valid in the Cuban context as it is in advanced capitalist societies where such research has already been carried out with some success.

The thesis comprises an introduction, ten chapters and a conclusion. The chapters are divided into three sections. Chapters 1 to 3 attempt a broad theoretical, historical and socio-political analysis of the cultural reality within which the Cuban revolutionary detective genre emerged. Chapters 4 to 6 analyse the Cuban detective narrative from its inception in the early part of the twentieth century until the emergence of Leonardo Padura Fuentes as the foremost exponent of the genre in Cuba after 1991. Chapters 7-10 concentrate upon the work of Leonardo Padura Fuentes, offering a reading of his detective tetralogy informed by the preceding discussion.

The contribution made by the thesis to knowledge of the subject is to build upon the work of Seymour Menton and Amelia S. Simpson on the development of the Cuban detective novel and to provide analyses of the pre-Revolutionary Cuban detective narrative and the work of Leonardo Padura Fuentes for the first time in the English language. The thesis concludes that the study of this popular genre in Cuba is of crucial importance to the scholar who wishes to reach as full an understanding of the social dynamics within that society as possible. In particular, it proves that Cuban detective fiction provides a useful barometer of social change which records the shifts in the Cuban *Zeitgeist* that have taken place over the past century.

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This work is predicated upon an assumption that literature speaks to the real world and that for works of fiction to have any meaning at all, they must in some way refer to a shared experience. That is not to say that we must live on Mars to appreciate the significance of Science Fiction, but it does mean that it is easier for an ancient Egyptian to understand hieroglyphics than a modern scholar. The language used, the metaphors, tropes, plots, characters and structure employed in any work of fiction must be accessible to the reader. In short, literature fails if it does not connect. In making this connection, literature also therefore provides a gateway to understanding the readers themselves and, perhaps more interestingly, the society in which the readers live. So, as its title implies, this thesis is an exploration of Cuba and its society and culture through a reading of its detective fiction. It is about the ways in which this particular narrative prose *connects* with its readership and includes necessarily a use of many approaches. It has therefore, a somewhat eclectic character. This is also a work which contains within it a narrative of itself. Five years in the writing, different pieces of it were written at different times and at different stages of the author's development.

Acknowledgements

My thanks must first of all go to my supervisor Professor Catherine Davies for her invaluable help and advice. To Verity Smith for her suggestions and support, to Jo Labanyi for having suggested the topic in the first place, and to my partner, Claudia Guerretta, for having the trust, love and generosity to pay the bills and endure the process with me.

I must also acknowledge the British Academy for the three years of funding they provided, which included a study visit to Cuba for three months in 1995 to collect the original material for this research.

In Cuba, I must thank Leonardo Padura Fuentes and Daniel Chavarría in particular for their help and advice. I must mention also the help of Rolo Lázaro and the staff at the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, as well as the staff at the headquarters of UNEAC, the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists. My thanks are also due to Ernesto and Estela Bravo and the staff at the public relations department of Cuban television. I am grateful also for the advice, help and guidance from among many others: Luis Adrián Betancourt, Imeldo Alvarez, Arnaldo Correa, Justo Vasco, Ron Ridenour, Ana Cairo, Salvador Redonet Cook, Rodolfo Valero, Amelia S. Simpson, Armando Cristóbal Pérez and Julio Travieso.

In London I owe a debt of gratitude to the staff of Hispanic Studies Department at Queen Mary and Westfield College, in particular, Professors Alan Deyermond and Ralph Penny, and Kay, the department secretary. My thanks also to the staff at the Senate House, University of London, and QMW libraries for all their patience and guidance.

Elsewhere, I am grateful to all those who responded to papers I have given on subjects covered in this thesis at conferences and seminars in London, Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool, Cambridge, Halle (Germany), Manchester and Middlesex.

Stephen Wilkinson, London January 31st 1999

Introduction

Why study detective fiction?

Detective or crime related fiction is a cultural phenomenon which has few commercially successful rivals. In Britain, only the romance fiction of publishers such as Mills and Boon have greater sales than crime novels. On the four main British television channels in one week of 1996 there were no less than twenty hours of shows with a police, crime or espionage theme.[1] Such is the popularity of this genre that even the products of crime fiction's earliest exponents such as Edgar Allen Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are endlessly republished, recreated in new media, translated and marketed throughout the world.[2] Along with the latest offerings these, and other 'giants' of the genre, such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and Agatha Christie, are still to be found on the shelves of bookstores at airports and railway stations. As detective fiction historian Julian Symons remarks, Sherlock Holmes became a myth:

> [...] so potent that even in his own lifetime Doyle was almost swamped by it, and the myth is no less potent today. Criminal and emotional problems are still addressed to Holmes for consideration, and pilgrimages are made to his rooms at 221B Baker St. (1992: 73)

The detective genre is so successful that it has become the subject of serious consideration. A popular cultural form which occupies the minds of so many people for so long, that crosses cultural boundaries so easily (there is a Sherlock Holmes society in every country in the world) without losing its fascination, is worthy of study.

The problem, however, remains: how do we approach this globally relevant subject? The study, not simply of detective narratives but other popular genres, such as soap operas and romance fiction, has been the subject of considerable controversy in

academic circles. The fact that culture is 'popular' has not always been considered a reason for giving it scholarly attention.

It is important at this stage to establish what is meant by the term 'popular' in this thesis. For anthropologists, the term 'popular culture' might be defined as the folk culture of a society, that which is produced by the people themselves and is an organic expression of their identity.[3] For the purposes of this thesis, however, detective fiction, being a phenomenon closely linked with the development of mass urbanized society and, in particular, late consumer-oriented capitalism, will be considered as falling into the same category as other mass-produced cultural commodities such as Hollywood musicals, superhero comics, soap operas and romance fiction. In this definition of the term, detective fiction is 'popular' in the same way that 'pop' music is, that is, it is consumed by large numbers of people, whose relationship to it is one of reception rather than production. My definition of what is popular is therefore borrowed from Bob Ashley: 'that which is enjoyed (and probably purchased) by large numbers of consumers' (Ashley 1989: 2). This is what has been presented traditionally as an obstacle to such products being accepted as worthy of academic study.[4] An idea of how this attitude is prevalent is conveyed in the definition of the term 'popular novel' provided by J A Cuddon:

> A loose term for a novel which has a wide readership; it often carries slightly pejorative connotations which suggest a middle- or low-brow 'audience' and imply that such a novel may not possess much literary merit. (1991: 729)

On one level, the resistance to the acceptance of such products in academic circles has rested on snobbishness and prudery since they commonly describe prurient scenes of sensation, sexuality, horror and spectacle. Such characteristics, in turn, are seen as evidence of the distinction between what have been termed 'high' and 'low', or 'elite'

and 'mass' cultural forms. Thus there are 'quality' newspapers (*The Guardian*) and 'popular' newspapers (*The Sun*); 'serious' drama (Shakespeare, Dennis Potter) and 'soap operas' (Coronation Street); 'art' cinema (Godard) and 'popular' or 'commercial' cinema (Speilberg). The same distinction emerges in painting between 'fine' art and 'commercial' art, and in literature, between 'serious' literature and 'popular' literature such as romances and detective fiction. [5]

These are culturally constructed distinctions susceptible to change. In film, for example, *Casablanca* may be regarded as a popular film but one which has achieved the status of an 'art movie'. D H Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1961), is a good example of a serious novel which has reached mass popularity. But despite such exceptions, 'popular' is generally accepted as signifying that a work is kitsch, trite, unchallenging, escapist or titillating. What is considered serious is recognised as being complex, arcane, innovative, challenging and, perhaps most importantly, appealing to an educated, elite public. In 1982, the journal *Literature, Teaching, Politics* reported that out of 1,389 units of study in the syllabuses of British examination boards, only four involved the study of what might be defined as popular texts and none of these were detective stories (Palmer 1991:1). The inclusion of television soap operas on the syllabus of the English literature course at an Oxford college became the cause for a debate on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme (September 23, 1995). The controversy was about whether studying such texts alongside Shakespeare afforded them a status they did not deserve. This is a major preoccupation. For some they are considered to be detrimental to the well-being of society. Take for example, Q D Leavis writing on the effects of the popular novel on the English readership:

> The best that the novel can do [...] is not to offer a refuge from actual life but to help the reader to deal less inadequately with it; the novel can deepen, extend, and refine experience by allowing the

> reader to live at the expense of an unusually intelligent and sensitive mind, by giving him access to a finer code than his own. But this, we have seen, the popular novels of the age do not do. On the contrary, they substitute an emotional code which [...] is actually inferior to the traditional code of the illiterate and which helps to make a social atmosphere unfavorable to the aspirations of the minority. They actually get in the way of genuine feeling and responsible thinking by creating cheap mechanical responses and by throwing their weight on the side of social, national and herd prejudices. The most popular contemporary fiction, it has been shown, unfits its readers for any novel that demands readjustment. (Q D Leavis 1939: 74)

As critics such as Terry Eagleton have shown, this distinction is essentially political in nature and comes from an understanding of literature being part of an artistic pantheon that somehow constitutes a civilization. Raymond Williams describes how, during the nineteenth century (beginning with the Romantics, Coleridge and Shelley), it became commonly accepted that the appreciation of literature was the key feature of a national culture. He notes, for example, that Shelley regarded the poet as the 'unacknowledged legislator' of mankind and that Arnold saw poetry, education and criticism as the elements that would save mankind from anarchy (1958: 125-136). Within this tradition it was implicitly understood that 'literature' or 'art' meant what was considered to be the 'best' terms of cultural expression. Thus the central thesis in Q D Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* is a distinction between 'fiction' and 'literature'. She describes what she perceives as the 'disintegration of the reading public' as a result of the rise in popularity of 'cheap' and 'sensational' fiction (1939: 161-202).

For the Leavises, fine art of all kinds, including fine literature, is necessary to prevent society falling into Philistinism, and since popular texts do not contribute to this function they were best ignored. But this assumption is based upon a premise that can be demonstrated as false for two reasons. First, the task of civilizing is one which has been imposed upon art rather than being inherent to it, a task which Palmer argues, it was not

capable of fulfilling (1991: 3). Second, the distinction between 'fine art' and 'sub-art' is not one that can be fairly substantiated since it rests upon a notion of taste which is not universal. On the first point, Palmer cites the scene from Andrzej Munk's film *The Passenger* (1961) in which an orchestra of Jewish concentration camp inmates perform Bach and Mozart for their SS captors, while in the background trainloads of victims are being shoved towards the death chambers. Such an example, he suggests, serves to illustrate that art is incapable of upholding civilization. With reference to the second objection, traditionally it is accepted that great art is naturally 'great', that its greatness is a property of the text in question and is objectively demonstrable as such. The objectivity of its value derives from the purported universality in its appeal. Great literature is such because it speaks to a universal experience, it speaks to the human condition in some way, perhaps not in exactly the same way to each of us, but in one way or another it is a measure of greatness that it applies to us all. Tony Bennett shows how this aesthetic is flawed in that it presupposes the possibility of proving that the objective view is possible (1987:52). In other words, it supposes that objections to a work's appraisal as 'art' can be overcome by argument and that subjective responses to the contrary are not valid.

Modern Western literary criticism has become informed by an awareness that a text does not exist until it is read (Barthes 1988:66). If a text is an act of communication, a vital part of this is the act of reading itself. In this sense a text is capable of being understood in as many different ways as there are readers. In effect, there can be numerous readings of any text and over time, as vocabulary and language change, this effect is multiplied. Thus there can be no definitive or objective appreciation or understanding of a text and, by logical inference, all subjective readings are therefore valid to a degree. In this way, all texts speak to us no matter how banal they may

appear to be, and are all worthy of study. Popular texts are acceptable as subjects of study because they are seen as encoding messages with a variety of meanings depending upon who is the receiver. The texts may be interpreted on multiple levels. This aesthetic dispenses with the notion that there is any art form which is worthier than another or that there is only one interpretation. Barthes, for example, is able to extrapolate on the meaning of a sign which reads simply 'Steak and Chips' and arrive at an understanding of the nature of French society (1971: 62-64). If it is possible to understand a society in some way through reference to its most popular dish, it should be possible to do so through its most popular fiction no matter how 'low' an art form this may be considered by the traditional literary establishment.

The study of popular fiction such as the detective genre, primarily the province of Marxist scholars, is generally less concerned with an aesthetic appreciation of the texts in themselves isolated from the society in which they exist. Raymond Williams (1961) regards the study of popular fiction to be central in trying to recreate what he calls the 'the structure of feeling', that is, approximating the feelings and experiences of a particular time and place. Studying the narratives enjoyed by a large proportion of the population can therefore inform our understanding of that society. For this reason alone, the study of detective fiction is worthwhile. Williams's approach will be considered in more detail in Chapter 1.

Turning to detective fiction, the Italian revolutionary leader and political theorist, Antonio Gramsci, realized that popular heroes like Sherlock Holmes had already 'entered into the intellectual lives of the masses, the heroes are separated from their literary origins and acquire the validity of historical figures' (1985: 350). As evidence of this he pointed to the fact that people all over the world were writing letters to 221b Baker Street, an address which did not exist, to solicit the services of a fictitious detective.

Gramsci asked why such novels were so widely read and had such an effect. His answer was that popularity had nothing to do with an aesthetic appreciation of the works. He concluded that detective stories and popular novels shared the common trait of only being read once because they were primarily a practical escape from reality, a pleasurable activity:

> One reads a book because of practical impulses, one rereads it for artistic reasons. The aesthetic emotion hardly ever comes on the first reading (1985: 370).

Whatever the objections to this view (which divorces immediate reading effects from aesthetics), Gramsci's insistence that the detective story had to be understood in order to create the basis for a new popular literature after the working classes took power provided an important shift in focus. What the masses found interesting was of interest to a communist who wished to lead them towards a new society. (See Chapter 1 for further discussion.)

However, there is no easy or transparent way to understand a society through its popular fiction. Colin Mercer states that whereas such cultural forms as detective fiction can be read as embodying or expressing their social determinations, they cannot come to terms with the real complexity of a society (1986: 183-4). Popular fiction should not be understood as providing the ideological underpinnings of society but as part of the composite of 'surface technologies' which elaborate and inscribe the relations between class, community, nation and history (1986:184). Following in the long tradition established by Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Stuart Hall, Mercer suggests that the value in looking at popular forms is that they are in society, a part of it, and actively contribute to the shaping of social relations. The task becomes one of understanding how such forms function in relation to each other and the rest of society. Therefore, as well as looking at the meanings that are possible within the narratives, it becomes necessary to

examine the technical conditions that such forms presuppose, the economic relations that regulate their production, and the institutional context that governs the modes of their social deployment and reception.

Detective fiction has been of particular interest to sociologically inclined theorists principally because its beginnings can be fixed with relative certainty and some precision in the early part of the nineteenth century, at the time when the industrial revolution and bourgeois ascendancy was taking place. Such theorists have concerned themselves with accounting for its rise and development in terms of its social and economic articulations. It is generally agreed that the ideology of individualism, the growth of science and rationality, the development of the city, the founding of police forces and of surveillance, are all considerations that are important in explaining the genre's development.[6] There is, however, a marked divergence of opinion regarding precisely how these social articulations should be related to one another.

This may be a result of the fact that detective fiction has diversified to the point where it can be sub-divided into various subgenres. Thus there is the nineteenth-century 'classic' fiction of Edgar Allen Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle; the 'Golden Age' literature (as it is known) of Agatha Christie; the hard-boiled thrillers of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, and the Cold War spy fiction of writers such as Ian Fleming and John Le Carré. All of these 'types' fall into the category loosely termed crime writing but each in turn have distinctive characteristics that relate to their separate time and place, and have therefore been subjected to varying interpretations by numerous and diverse scholars.[7]

Walter Benjamin, for example, discusses the relationship between the figure of the detective and that of the flanêur. He reverses the emphasis in earlier accounts of the detective genre, which concentrated on the idea that it was an expression of

individualism, by arguing that detective fiction is primarily concerned with erasing individuality. Benjamin argues that the origins of the genre are linked to the massification and impersonality of social life associated with the development of the city. The form offers an antidote to the situation in which society appears as a morass in which the criminal can hide by blending into the big city crowd. He also sees the nineteenth-century detective novel as exhibiting the bourgeois 'pandemonium' through its descriptions of the ornate oriental interiors of the bourgeois household which were given their only 'adequate description and analysis' in these novels (1974: 48). For Jean Paul Sartre, Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe was the ultimate 'existential hero' who became a kind of middle class model, a self-employed individualist who could define himself in an increasingly state-controlled, capitalist monopoly nightmare (Tani, 1984: xii). Camus actually credited James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* as the inspiration for *L'Etranger (The Outsider,* 1942*).*[8]

Whatever respectability detective fiction has achieved, it owes a debt to Sartre and Camus for encouraging it to be studied by modern literary critics. Structuralists, post-structuralists and deconstructionists, have written so self-consciously about its mechanics that today it has become a platform for a more literary approach. Jorge Luis Borges, in stories such as *La muerte y la brújula* by referencing the work of Poe and G.K. Chesterton exemplifies an explicitly metafictional trend in detective story writing. Philosophers such as Umberto Eco are writing detective stories such as *In the Name of the Rose,* intended to be considered as serious fiction and contain within them highly sophisticated philosophical debates. Following the work of Michel Foucault and Borges, the figure of the detective may be perceived as subjecting the city to a controlling and individualizing gaze which ultimately reassures the reader and neutralizes the fear of the unknown. The elevated standpoint of the detective, his ability to see and find clues is

argued to represent the subconscious desire to make society transparent (Tani, 1984: ix). The genre has even been analyzed as a literary representation of capitalist property relations and, paradoxically, as a genre which also consciously avoids dealing with the social reality of capitalist society. These issues will be further discussed in the thesis.

The object of this thesis is to apply the approaches taken in the analysis of 'capitalist' detective fiction to the detective fiction which has emerged in Cuba in order to enhance our understanding of Cuban society. The broad question is put: How does a popular genre relate to the society in which it circulates? The specific rider is added: How does Cuban detective fiction relate to Cuban society? Thus specifically the thesis asks: How did Cuban detective fiction emerge? How has it developed? What can the study of it tell us about that culture, its place in the world and its significance? The study does not start from the premise that detective fiction reflects reality, but that it can provide an angle of incidence from which society can be viewed in a manner which informs understanding. Following Mike Davis (1990: 36-44) who suggests that in the case of the *noir* genre in Los Angeles fiction has come to serve as a 'surrogate public history' of the California metropolis during the 1940s and 1950s, this thesis intends to show how detective fiction might be read in a similar way in Cuba. By examining the genre's development it shall attempt to prove that the genre has become, like the so-called 'hard-boiled' novels in the USA, a vehicle which conveys the problems and preoccupations of contemporary Cuban society.

Notes

[1] *TV Times*, 27 April- 3 May 1996. IPC Publishing, London.

[2] John Conquest in *Trouble is their Business: Private Eyes in Fiction, Film and Television 1927-1988* (1990) lists 952 authors, 176 feature films, 164 television serials, 56 radio programmes and 1,563 detective characters in the English language alone. The British National Bibliography (1998) classifies as 'detective and mystery stories' 2,189 titles published in Britain between 1995 and 1998. By comparison, 3,989 titles are classified as 'love stories' published over the same period.

[3] For a discussion of this concept see Matthias Röhrig Asunção, 'Popular Culture and Regional Society in Nineteenth Century Maranhao, Brazil'. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (14: 3. 1995) 265-67).

[4] Ashley summarises a wide-ranging debate about the definitions of what is 'mass' and 'popular' culture. For example, for the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer (Arato and Gebhardt eds. 1986) posited a view that mass culture amounted to a hegemonic control of popular (the people's) tastes, whereas for Stuart Hall *et al* (1980) popular culture came to mean a much more 'contradictory space' in which resistance to the 'mass produced' is also a feature.

[5] Terry Eagleton argues that 'the aesthetic' is a bourgeoise notion referring to 'style and technique' whereas for him the term 'aesthetically superior' means that a work is 'more profund, authentic, and humanely historical' (1976) 56-57). Such a definition therefore cuts across the bourgeoise view since there is no reason why a popular form could not fulfil these criteria. Christine Anne Evans (1994: 159) suggests the divergence of opinion is based upon differing notions of what is considered to be the 'proper function of literature and the ethical effect it should have on the reader'. Detective fiction she argues is considered 'bad literature' because its reliance on repeated and familiar strategies does not challenge the reader.

[6] See for instance Julian Symons (1992: 27-55) and Bogomil Rainov, *La Novela Negra* (1978: 31-57.

[7] Symons (1992) 93-121).

[8] Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives* (1983: 36).

Section One

The theoretical and cultural background

Chapter 1

The relationship between literature and society: a theoretical framework

The Cuban revolution as an historical event offers a unique opportunity to test some long established theories concerning the relationship between culture and society. This revolution, occurring in a relatively developed western hemispheric island nation with a generally cohesive and small population, converted Cuba into a kind of social laboratory in which revolutionary thought and practice has been given its most detailed examination. With reference to Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and his ideas concerning the role of art and literature in shaping the consciousness of the masses, the fact that the Cuban revolution became Marxist-Leninist underscores even further its significance as a 'testing ground'. Gramsci was concerned with theorising the type of process of change that the Cuban revolutionaries actually undertook and the problem with which they were confronted in practice: how to arrive at the point at which the majority of citizens accept and internalise a new ideology so that a revolutionary society can be ruled by consent rather than coercion. (See for example Gramsci's discussion on intellectuals and education in Forgacs ed. 1988: 301-303). In Gramsci's view as expounded in his *Prison Notebooks*, hegemony is the total sum of the ways in which a dominant class exercises its power, including the ways in which the oppressed accept their oppression passively. He was concerned with studying the extent to which dominant classes are successful in projecting their own particular ways of seeing the

world and human and social relationships so that they are accepted as common sense and the natural order by those who are subordinated to them. Revolution, the overturning of existing dominant class structures, is seen as not only the transfer of political and economic power to a new class but also as the creation of an alternative hegemony through new forms of experience and consciousness (1988: 70-71).

Central to Gramsci's thinking is a rejection of the orthodox Marxist view that change in the economic base is what matters most and that the superstructure (culture/society) will automatically reflect this. Instead, hegemony becomes the primary zone of struggle and the decisive factor in bringing about real change. Gramsci redeveloped the crude version of historical materialism which sees economic forces as defining ideas and reinserted the importance of ideas as bringing about change or altering the course of social development. Hegemony was his way of explaining how the ideas of the ruling classes become pervasive and act as a brake upon revolutionary consciousness in the masses. In this way, Gramsci saw the role of 'culture' and the intellectuals as being crucial to both the preservation of the capitalist order and the creation of a new society.

This has significant consequences for the study of literature in that in Gramsci's vision, both literature within culture and culture within society form the mechanism through which hegemony is maintained. Gramsci rejects the notion that culture is dependent on the economic base upon which it rests and replaces this with the idea that culture relates to the economy in a reciprocal way. In Gramsci's theory, a social class comes to dominate by attaining hegemony in civil as well as economic and political society and it does this through diffusing its ideology through culture. Thus culture, whether it is a priest's sermon or a detective novel, becomes important as an object for interpretation and understanding. For Gramsci, it is one of historical materialism's tasks

to explain the roots and ramifications of the ideologies which bind society together (1988: 393).

Not surprisingly, therefore, literature as an act of individual and communal expression participates in the struggle for hegemony. For Gramsci, culture in general and literature in particular, play key roles in countering existing hegemonies and establishing new ones. The forces of hegemony are in various ways the historical object of fictional representations, but with greater or lesser degrees of awareness in different works. Gramsci therefore concerned himself with the role of literary criticism in decoding the ideological messages within different modes of fiction. Thus in the case of Cuba, where a popular Socialist revolution has taken place, Gramsci's ideas provide the framework for examining how the new dominant class has set about building its own hegemony through the diffusion of its particular ideology. The general aim of this thesis is to examine Cuban detective fiction from this perspective, that is, as one of the mediums through which the diffusion of a revolutionary hegemony was attempted, a hegemony that has been possibly weakened in the post-Soviet years. In doing so the thesis draws upon a long tradition of Marxist literary criticism within which Gramsci stands out as one of the most seminal theoreticians. In this first chapter I wish to examine this theoretical tradition in order to establish a methodology upon which my reading of the Cuban detective novel will proceed.

Frederick Engels, in a letter to Margaret Harkness in April 1888 is said to have initiated Marxist literary criticism with his observation that in his view: 'The more the opinions of the author are hidden, the better the work of art' (Eagleton and Milne eds. 1996: 39-40). This aesthetic principle, that the author's views should be somehow 'hidden' within the text, is a current running through Marxist literary thought and goes to the heart of the Marxist project. For how, we must ask, do we change people's

opinions without preaching to them? What Engels realised was that there is an inverse relationship between the extent to which a text is didactic and whether or not it succeeds 'as a work of art'. Engels's point is that a novel's thesis must spring directly from the action and the characters themselves. In other words, there should be no explicit reference to the thesis at all. For this reason, Engels was impressed by Balzac whom he praised for his realism. Although Balzac himself was aristocratic, Engels felt that his fiction implicitly led the reader to the conclusion that the downfall of the nobility was necessary. Engels makes a distinction between the conscious political attitude of the author and the implicit world view in his work. Engels also points to the value of Balzac's fiction to the historian in understanding the rise of the French bourgeoisie:

> He describes how the last remnants of this, to him, model society [the nobility] gradually succumbed before the intrusion of the vulgar moneyed upstart, or were corrupted by him; how the grand dame, whose conjugal infidelities were but a mode of asserting herself in perfect accordance with the way she had been disposed of in marriage, gave way to the bourgeoisie who horned her husband for cash or cashmere; and around this central picture he groups a complete history of French Society from which, even in economic details (for instance the rearrangement of real and personal property after the Revolution) I have learned more than from all the professed historians, economists and statisticians of the period together. (1996: 40)

In this short letter, Engels establishes two important functions for literature which inform subsequent Marxist approaches: firstly, the way in which literature can be most effectively used to alter the reader's consciousness; and secondly, the way in which fiction can be useful for the historian to establish a rounded picture of a particular age. These two functions are the basis for my approach to Cuban detective fiction. The rest of this chapter will establish the framework of this approach in more detail with reference to the work of Gramsci, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton in particular.

As we have seen, for Engels the success of a novel 'as a work of art' lay in the manner in which the personal views of the author were disguised. It is the extent to

which meaning spontaneously *emerges from* rather than is consciously *put into* a text that matters. Balzac favoured the nobility but could not help reveal their weakness. The extent to which the author is unconsciously a channel for competing credible characters or a consciously creative force with an ulterior motive is what distinguishes the 'good' novel from 'bad'. The matter is one of establishing the sincerity of the author.

In this vein, in his discussion of the role of literary criticism, Gramsci suggests that:

> Given the principle that one should look only to the artistic character of a work of art, this does not in the least prevent one from investigating the mass of feelings and attitudes present in the work of art itself. (1985:108)

Such investigation allows the reader to establish the sincerity of the author because the depth and complexity of the feelings and attitudes expressed, for example, by the characters in a novel, give it away:

> One should examine whether a work of art might not have failed because the author was diverted by external, practical (that is, artificial and insincere) pre-occupations. (1985:108)

Gramsci continues: if a work fails because of this it shows the author's

> [...] enthusiasm was fictitious and externally willed, that in that specific case he was not really an artist, but a servant who wanted to please his masters. (1985:109)

Gramsci therefore identified two sources of motivation in the production of art. The first was purely aesthetic, the desire to produce art itself, and the other was politico-cultural, having to do with frankly political ends. For Gramsci, any polity with a valid existence (that is, accepted by the majority of those living within it) will create its own 'cultural world' (1985: 46). This world will grow spontaneously from within the society and cannot be forced to exist through political will. Any artistic production that is forced in such a way will be betrayed by the insincerity of the feelings expressed through it:

> When the politician puts pressure on the art of his time to express a particular cultural world, his activity is use of politics, not artistic criticism. If the cultural world for which one is fighting is a living and necessary fact, its expansiveness will be irresistible and it will find its artists. Yet if, despite the pressure this irresistibility does not appear and is not effective, it means that the world in question was artificial and fictitious. (1985:109)

With respect to creating a new society and within it, a viable cultural world, Gramsci also observes that there is a potential point of conflict between politicians and artists in any given society owing to their different and inherently antagonistic outlooks:

> [...] one must keep the following criterion in mind when dealing with the relationship between literature and politics: the literary man must necessarily have a less precise and definite outlook than the politician. He must be less 'sectarian', if one can put it this way, but in a 'contradictory' way. (1988: 396)

The difference lies in the fact that the politician must always strive to effect a change in human beings in order to move them along towards the future, whereas the artist is more concerned with describing the way things are at a given time. This difference in outlook means that conflict between the two is inevitable:

> For the politician every 'fixed' image is *a priori* reactionary: he considers the entire movement in its development. The artist, however, must have 'fixed' images that are cast into their definitive form. The politician imagines man as he is and, at the same time, how he should be in order to reach a specific goal. His task is precisely to stir men up, to get them to leave their present life behind in order to become collectively able to reach the proposed goal, that is to get them to 'conform' to the goal. The artist necessarily and realistically depicts 'that which is' at a given moment (the personal, the non-conformist). From the political point of view, therefore, the politician will never be satisfied with the artist: he will always find him behind the times, always anachronistic and overtaken by the real flow of events. (1988: 396)

Gramsci's observations lead him to argue that it is an error to adopt what he calls a 'single' strategy in promoting a new literature. Instead he urges a 'multiple' approach in that even at the most progressive times there are also 'retrogressive moments' (1988:

397). He advocates an abandonment of prejudices, most importantly the idea that the popular is not 'intellectual' arguing that it is only from the readers of 'serial literature that one can select a sufficient and necessary public' for creating a new cultural base (1988: 397). He cites as an example the way in which G K Chesterton had transformed the detective genre (by injecting a Christian moral dimension):

> The premise of the new literature cannot but be historical, political and popular. It must aim at elaborating that which already is, whether polemically, or in some other way does not matter. What does matter, though, is that it sinks its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional. (1988:397)

Gramsci's analysis has serious repercussions for the study of literature in Socialist revolutionary societies. On the one hand, he perceives the need to transform society and the role that art, in particular popular artistic forms such as detective fiction, have to play in carrying that out. But at the same time he is sensitive to the fact that art itself is an organic process which cannot be forced to conform but must grow spontaneously out of the new conditions, otherwise it will not be art at all:

> To fight for a new art would mean to fight to create new individual artists, which is absurd since artists cannot be created artificially. One must speak of a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life, until it becomes a new way of feeling and seeing reality and, therefore, a world intimately ingrained in 'possible artists' and 'possible works of art.'(1988: 395)

What follows in this thesis therefore is an examination of Cuban detective fiction as a detailed example of the way in which a revolutionary society has encountered these problems in practice, the ways these problems have manifested themselves and the extent to which they have been resolved, if at all. As I shall show in the chapters below, detective fiction in Cuba not only had 'roots deep in the humus' of popular culture when the revolution triumphed, it was also keenly taken up by intellectuals

afterwards as a propaganda tool to help consolidate a socialist consciousness. As such, it has provided a field in which the kinds of conflict Gramsci identified surrounding the role of art and artists in a revolutionary society have been played out.

It must be kept in mind that the task of creating a new hegemony and using art and literature as means to do so, was not unique to the Cuban experience. The Soviet Union provides the most obvious previous example. There was no greater pressure applied to the art of its time than that applied by the Bolsheviks in the name of 'socialist realism'. Launched by Maxim Gorky and A A Zhdanov at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow, socialist realism was a tragic travesty of Gramsci's aesthetic. Quoting Stalin, Zhdanov called on writers to become 'the engineers of human souls' (Zhadnov 1978:63). Socialist realism meant that the writer 'should be guided by politics, without which the Soviet state cannot exist, so that we can bring up our young people not in a spirit of could not care less, and without ideals, but in a spirit of alertness and revolutionary zeal' (1978:60). Zhdanov, as Minister of Culture, was responsible for disciplining a number of writers who failed to adopt the correct ideological line. Implicit in his actions and the need for such a defined 'line' is the tacit admission that the kind of 'organic cultural world' Gramsci was calling for did not exist in the Soviet Union, that indeed the Soviet world was 'artificial and fictitious' since neither the artists nor their art spontaneously 'sprang from within it'.

A similar observation can be made when considering the post-revolutionary Cuban detective novel, which in great measure owes its existence to an annual prize given by the Ministry of the Interior, a political institution in charge of state security and the National Revolutionary Police (see Chapter 5). The rules to which writers must conform delineate the nature of the stories and the character of the police protagonists and this militates against the production of the kind of art Gramsci was calling for.

I will establish just how possible it is to take issue with the Cuban detective novel produced by the competition from this perspective, that is, that by serving a 'political master' a cultural world is created that is artificial and fictitious. I will examine the Cuban police novel in the light of Gramsci's observation that the depth of feeling in the characters gives away the extent to which the artist is obeying external political demands. Finally, by contrast, I intend to show the extent to which more recent authors of detective fiction have succeeded in breaking out of these constraints to create what Gramsci termed, a more 'irresistible' cultural world (1985: 109). The texts will be examined as ideological discourses in the sense that Terry Eagleton observes as: 'a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes'(1991: 9), that is, focusing on authorial intention. But I am also concerned with studying them as forms of literary expression that also present 'ways of seeing' that can inform our understanding of Cuban society.

How does the historically real enter the texts and how may the texts be read, in Mike Davis's words, as 'surrogate histories' (1990:44)? The way in which the study of fiction can perform this function is explained by Eagleton in his book *Criticism and Ideology* (1973) where he posits the idea that although fiction cannot be read as 'real' history, history nonetheless enters fictional texts precisely as ideology:

> It is [...] intrinsic to the character of literary discourse that it does not take history as its immediate object, but works instead upon ideological forms and materials of which history is, as it were, the concealed underside. (1973:73)

These ideological forms determine a pseudo-reality within the text so that it becomes:

> [...] a tissue of meanings, perceptions and responses which inhere in the first place in that imaginary production of the real which is ideology. The textual real is related to the historical real, not as an imaginary transposition of it, but as the product of certain

> signifying practices whose source and referent is, in the last instance, history itself. (1973:75)

Broadly speaking therefore, the importance of literature is that it gives us an imaginary representation that describes not the reality itself but ways in which a reality has of signifying itself. It is not that the Havana of Cuba's detective fiction is the reality itself but the way the city is described represents the ways the revolution has of depicting its reality. That is to say, rather than being seen as an imaginary history being presented as real history, Cuban detective fiction represents a negotiation of a particular ideological experience of real history.

Thus whereas in the case of directed art such as socialist realism, ideology enters the text directly, there are also ways in which ideology enters the text indirectly. It is the distance that separates a text from ideology that provides the clue to how it may be understood. The task of criticism for Eagleton is to perform a kind of deconstruction of the texts, to:

> [...]install itself in the incompleteness of the work in order to theorise it, to explain the ideological necessity of those 'not saids' which constitute the very principle of its identity. Its object is the 'unconsciousness' of the work - that of which it is not, and cannot be aware.(1973:89)

I shall explore the incompleteness and 'unconsciousness' of Cuban detective texts in order to tease out significances which will inform our broader understanding of the Cuban revolutionary process. The value of this approach is perhaps best explained by Raymond Williams who, in *The Long Revolution* (1961), argues that the analysis of a given culture is of importance in that it gives a specific insight into social organisation. For Williams, like Gramsci, knowledge of how art relates to society is vital if a full understanding of a society is to be achieved. Williams turns upon its head the conventional wisdom about the function of social history and literary history in the study

of a society. Instead of seeing two disciplines, each with a separate tendency to marginalise the other, he calls for an exposition of culture which is more than a sum of these two parts (1961:46). He suggests a search for patterns within cultural organisation, the discovery of which will form the basis of cultural analysis:

> It is with the relationship between these patterns, which sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities, which sometimes again reveal discontinuities of an unexpected kind, that general cultural analysis is concerned. (1961:47)

Williams argues that it is impossible to ever fully know the general organisation of a time and a place other than our own. Certain elements of a past time and/or place can never be recovered and even those that are recovered are abstracted. Williams uses the analogy of a chemistry experiment in which an original substance is distilled down to its crystal form. The crystals represent our knowledge of past times and places, the experiences of the past come down to us in a distilled and therefore abstracted form. Thus it becomes impossible for us to recreate or experience what it must have felt like to be a part of that time and place:

> The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period, is this felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time: a sense of the ways in which particular activities combined into a way of thinking and living. (1961:47)

Williams identifies a common element that is shared not simply by a particular culture but changes within cultures with each generation. We become aware of this when we realise that younger generations speak 'a different language' or when we read accounts about our own lives written by outsiders (1961: 48). Such formal descriptions always seem to be too crude to capture exactly what it is like to be a part of a particular time and place. Williams calls this sense of being the 'structure of feeling':

> In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general

> organisation. And it is in this respect that the arts of a period [...] are of major importance. (1961:48)

The structure of feeling is carried by the living participants of a generation and can only be fully known by them. However, scholars may get close to it through a careful study of all aspects of that generation's culture as it is passed down to us. In this respects *all* types of cultural output are valuable sources regardless of their perceived quality as works of art. For Williams, popular English novels of the 1840s are of equal importance as the established literary canon in the study of the society of that time, the latter being representative of only the new middle-class and its ideology of merit, work and individualism. In his study of the popular novels he discovered elements which contradicted this middle-class ideology, such as the predominant use of magic in the texts, by which usurious landlords would be miraculously killed or penniless heroes saved from poverty by a timely legacy. Such contradictions are for Williams important in establishing an understanding of the desires and feelings of the people who lived at that time. What is important is the comparison we can make between art and the society in which it is produced:

> If we compare art with its society, we find a series of real relationships showing its deep and central connections with the rest of the general life. We find description, discussion, exposition through plot and experience of the social character. We find also, in certain characteristic forms and devices, evidence of the deadlocks and unsolved problems of the society: often admitted to consciousness for the first time in this way. (1961:69).

Williams defines these 'forms and devices' as the 'selective tradition' of the dominant culture:

> [...] that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as '*the* tradition', '*the* significant past'. But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are

> neglected and excluded. Even more crucially, some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the dominant culture. (1980:39)

Williams distinguishes three levels of culture: 'lived culture', that is only accessible to those living in a particular time or place; 'recorded culture', that comprises the arts, writing, film, and the everyday artifacts that can be found from a particular time or place; and lastly, 'the culture of selective tradition' (1961: 48-71). This means that the survival of a culture is governed by a selection process that gradually comprises a tradition. For instance, the writing of a particular time may be constituted by thirty major works but only a handful of these might be known or read by subsequent generations. Selection is governed by interests, which include class interests, commercial interests and cultural institutions, such as universities, libraries and schools committed to keeping the tradition alive or at least available. In societies with no such institutions there is no culture. Unless culture is recorded and remembered then it is lost. Thus, cultural tradition is a process of selection and re-selection by ancestors.

Williams provides the example of Chartism in Britain as having no adequate history. This revolutionary working class movement of the early part of the nineteenth century was 'wished forgotten' by the institutions charged with the selective tradition (1961:58). By the 1880s the growth in power of trade unions kindled a desire to rediscover Chartism, but the absence of an adequate record meant that it was impossible to satisfactorily recover the history of this movement. Williams takes the popular novels of the 1840s in England and through an analysis arrives at an understanding of the period's social character.

In the remainder of Section One and Section Two, I will examine how Cuban post-revolutionary detective fiction developed, firstly upon a tradition established before the

revolution, and later out of a perceived need to create a viable alternative to 'capitalist' forms. This effort, in turn, will be shown to have created, by the 1980s, a selective tradition in which earlier, significant Cuban authors have been neglected or forgotten. In Section Three, I shall focus on the period of the 1990s and the work of one particular author, Leonardo Padura Fuentes, to show the extent to which he has reacted against the dominant culture and contributes towards a movement that is both a cause and effect of a process of fundamental change in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

What, then, constitutes the dominant culture of the Cuban revolution? Before looking at detective fiction itself, the next chapter examines some of the major constituents of Cuban revolutionary ideology. This will provide a series of benchmarks against which the texts can be measured.

Chapter 2

Nationalism, Marxism and sacrifice: Cuban revolutionary ideology and the Cuban state

On visiting Cuba in 1960, barely a year after the rebels' triumphant entry into Havana and over a year before Fidel Castro announced that the revolutionary programme would be Marxist-Leninist, Jean-Paul Sartre (whose ideas will be discussed at length in Section Three) declared that what surprised him above all was the 'ausencia aparente de ideología' (1960:4).[1] On asking various people in Havana what they thought the ideology of the revolution was they told him, he says, 'a thousand times':

> 'La Revolución es una *praxis* que forja sus ideas en la práctica.' (1960: 4)[2]

Sartre noted the way in which the ideology of the revolution was actually being formed from day to day as people responded to attacks, including of a political and a physically violent nature, emanating from the United States.[3] He concluded that it would only be a matter of time before the revolution would become more radical. He and his partner, Simone de Beauvoir, were present in Havana when the French cargo ship *La Coubre* exploded killing hundreds of workers. The explosion was blamed on counter-revolutionary sabotage and resulted in the leadership taking the decision to mobilise the masses into Committees for the Defence of the Revolution.[4] Sartre, who stood on the platform with Fidel Castro as he made a speech in honour of the *La Coubre* victims, described the effect of such actions, and the mood they provoked in the people and their leader:

> Castro se identificaba con el pueblo, su única fuerza; el pueblo manifestaba al mismo tiempo su aprobación y su intransigencia: el agresor había tenido la iniciativa, pero el contra-golpe provocado

> por su torpeza había sido la radicalización del pueblo por medio de sus jefes y de los jefes por medio del pueblo. (1960:8)

Sartre thus witnessed a dynamic according to which Cuba's revolution shifted its ideological perspective in response to the circumstances. He noted that while there was no coherent political ideology at that time (early in 1960) there were three identifiable ideas that had united the Cuban nation against the dictator Fulgencio Batista:

> Son bien conocidos; otros (en 1933, en 1944) los habían definido: una nación soberana, dirigentes honrados, ciudadanos libres. Durante la primera mitad del siglo se efectuó más de una tentativa para realizar ese ideal, pero todas terminaron en el fracaso. (1960:8)

Sartre explains that these aims were unattainable with the economy still locked into a monoculture (sugar) economy dependent on the United States. Unless the revolution broke free from this dependence the aims of national sovereignty and collective dignity would never be fulfilled. By referring to the past failures, Sartre realised that the revolution was the fulfilment of long held aspirations and that this historical perspective is essential to any understanding of the forces that led to the overthrow of Batista. Above all, Sartre believed that Cuba's revolution was based on deeply held sentiments and while it may not have had a coherent political ideology at the time, its apparent radicalism was not, as some western commentators have claimed, a veneer to justify a dictatorship by Fidel Castro.[5]

Given that it is a changing process, what are the constituent or consistent elements of Cuba's revolutionary ideology? To answer this question, it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of the term 'ideology.' As Williams (1977) explains this is by no means easy as there are three common versions of the concept to be found in Marxist writing:

> (i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group
> (ii) a system of illusory beliefs - false ideas or false consciousness- which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge

> (iii) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas. (1997: 55)

For the purposes of this study, ideology will be defined as in (i), in this case, the system of beliefs that were characteristic of the Cuban revolutionaries at the time of the revolution in 1959 and, as in (iii), by looking at the way in which that system changed over subsequent time.

In his study of the Cuban revolution, Antoni Kapcia (1990) defines ideology as:

> [...] the more or less systematic body of ideas, values, symbols and myths that is shared by a particular social group. This group must identify itself consistently as a coherent and separate identity (that is, a 'nation'), and it uses the 'body of ideas' to explain the environment as it has been (that is, its history), as it is and, most importantly as it *should* be, and also to offer a guide to collective action towards the attainment of that identified 'should be' existence. (1990:163)

Kapcia goes on to point out the necessary paradoxical nature of ideologies in the sense that they must be both unchanging and changing. They must be changing in the Gramscian sense of being 'organic', emerging naturally from the social group and maintaining a commitment to certain inherited values or traditions which uniquely define the group. But they must also be adaptable; they must change in order to fit new circumstances and thereby maintain their appeal. An ideology therefore evolves continuously in a symbiotic relationship with the society from which it emerges and which is in turn influenced by it.

Sartre, in 1960, was already in touch with this process in Cuba and Kapcia, thirty years later, with the benefit of hindsight, concurs in the view that there is a continuity within Cuban revolutionary ideology that is indigenous, historic and self-radicalising:

> Indeed, that continuity is identifiable not only within the revolutionary decades but also between the revolution and the preceding century of political development; for it is the evolution of 'Cubanist' ideology that gives the post-1959 process a clear

> nationalist and historical pedigree and makes it less an 'alien' import, or an elite imposition, than an indigenous phenomenon.(1990:163)

Gramsci (1988: 70-73) explains that ideologies can be either 'hegemonic', serving the interests of a dominant class, or 'dissident', expressing the 'world view' of an opposing subordinated class or group. With reference to Cuba, Robin Blackburn (1963) describes how the revolution represented the failure of the Cuban elite to successfully develop a coherent hegemonic ideology and how the rebels became the focus of a dissident ideology that eventually became so popularly held that it created a counter-hegemony that forced Batista to flee. Blackburn identifies three mass-popular currents (outside the well-established pro-Soviet Cuban Communist party, the Partido Socialista Popular) that combined to create what he terms a 'revolutionary consciousness' rather than a coherent ideology. First, an 'African tradition' steeped in a long history of slave insurrections and participation in the Cuban Wars of Independence (1963: 88); second, a heretical strand of Christianity which had identified itself with the poor (1963: 89), and finally, a deep current of nationalism which had been frustrated by the late arrival of independence at the end of the nineteenth century and its subsequent incomplete nature as a result of the overwhelming US influence on the island. This final aspect, according to Blackburn, owed much to the political thought of the nineteenth-century independence fighter José Martí, who had articulated a philosophy in favour of social justice and against imperialism. Following the 1895-98 War of Independence, the US enforced peace settlement on the island ensured that:

> Cuban nationalism retained and developed the radical character that Martí gave to it. Because the Cuban bourgeoisie was structurally integrated into the neo-colonial economic regime, nationalism became a force directed against the whole social order, not merely the imperialist power. (1963: 90)

Blackburn explains that the weakness of the Cuban ruling class and the traditional structures, such as the Church and the military which underpinned it meant that from the 1920s onwards the Cuban state was held together merely by force and that rule by consent had been impossible for a long period prior to the events of the 1950s. In the absence of a viable hegemonic ideology, a powerful and popular culture of dissent emerged which directly challenged the neo-colonial domination of the island by the United States. Ultimately the Batista dictatorship rested only on military power and the revolution took place without 'a real political organisation or ideology' (1963: 91). However, Kapcia (1990) disagrees, suggesting that the nineteenth-century nationalism of Martí that Blackburn accepts as decisive, can be discerned as the basis of an identifiable ideology of dissent. This became more deeply entrenched during the twentieth century as it became increasingly evident that the United States was denying Cuba its 'true' sovereignty. Kapcia calls this radical nationalism *Cubanismo.* He sees it as exceptional in that it cut across class divisions in Cuban society. It conforms to a pattern of radical 'Third World' nationalisms which are based on the idea

> [...] that the principal concern of political activity [...] should be the furtherance, protection and consolidation, or even the 'rescue' of a 'national identity' which is seen to transcend class or region and to have its roots in a shared cultural, territorial, and above all historical experience, but which is currently being denied, repressed or distorted by a system that is alien and imposed. (1990:166)

Blackburn and Kapcia agree that the Cuban revolution was exceptional in that Cuban nationalism also embraced notions of racial and social equality. They both suggest that because Cuba's independence from Spain was delayed for so long, the struggle came to incorporate modernist ideas. Thus anti-colonialism became linked to nineteenth-century emancipation movements such as anti-slavery and trades unionism. These, coupled with an enlightened and intellectual leadership, which included a black

military general, ensured that Cuba's independence movement was more radical than its continental predecessors.[6] Indeed, the first independence war of 1868 erupted after a number of slave uprisings and was launched by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes who freed his slaves in order to enlist their help. Later, the 1895 war was masterminded by José Martí whose Krausist-based philosophy informed a strictly Christian and egalitarian ethos. As well as demanding the freedom of Cuba from Spain, the independence fighters began to include demands for social justice. This is explained by the Cuban Philosopher Juan Antonio Blanco:

> There is a peculiarity in the ideology of our independence struggle as given to us both by Felix Varela, the priest, and José Martí, the major intellectual and protagonist of this struggle. And this peculiarity is that Cuba's struggle for independence not only had a political goal of gaining sovereignty, but also an ethical goal of building a new kind of republic. (1994:10)

By the time Martí initiated the second Cuban War of Independence in 1895, he had already lived in the United States and felt that the democratic institutions there were corroded by egotism and selfishness. He was also critical of the *caudillos* in the rest of Latin America whom he saw as building new forms of exploitation:

> So in the case of Cuba, the independence movement was not only a political struggle to achieve national sovereignty, but it was also very strongly based on an ethical ideal of social justice. To use José Martí's words, the goal of the revolution was to build a republic with all and for the good of all- 'con todos y para el bien de todos'. (1994:11)

With the US intervention in the Independence War and the imposition of the Platt Amendment on the fledgling Cuban republic, this goal was not achieved and ensured that the struggle would continue throughout the century breaking out in renewed rebellions, as Sartre noted, in 1933 and 1944, among others.

Martí's vision gave *Cubanismo* an important moral dimension. Kapcia even goes so far as to call it a 'moral crusade' (1990:168). It placed great importance on the notion

of self-sacrifice. As more and more martyrs joined the ranks of those already killed, the notion of sacrifice became increasingly potent.[7] This verse from a play written by Martí in 1869, one year after the start of the first War of Independence (1868-78), illustrates the point:

> ¡Nubia venció! Muero feliz: la muerte
> Poco me importa, pues logré salvarla...
> ¡Oh qué dulce es morir, cuando se muere
> Luchando audaz por defender la patria!
> (1978: 24)

His famous last letter, written on the eve of his death in combat, encompasses the different strands of his ideas: self-sacrifice to the greater good, devout nationalism, and an underlying suspicion of the intentions and ambitions of the United States:

> [...] ya estoy todos los días en peligro de dar mi vida por mi país y por mi deber... de impedir a tiempo con la independencia de Cuba que se extiendan por las Antillas los Estados Unidos y caigan, con esa fuerza más, sobre nuestras tierras de América. Cuanto hice hasta hoy, y haré, es para eso. En silencio ha tenido que ser y como indirectamente, porque hay cosas que para lograrles han de andar ocultas, y de proclamarse en lo que son, levantarían dificultades demasiado recias para alcanzar sobre ellas el fin... Viví en el monstruo, y le conozco las entrañas:- y mi honda es la de David. (Letter to Manuel Mercado, 1981: 576)

The willingness to give one's life for the ideals of revolution imbued Fidel Castro's July 26th Movement with a deeply Christian ethic based upon Martí's example, who was referred to as 'el Apóstol'. The Movement's first action was planned in 1953, the year of the centenary of Martí's birth and its first members called themselves 'la generación del centenario' (Rojas 1965). Fidel Castro's project as laid down in his Moncada Declaration (1953) and his famous defence *La historia me absolverá'* (1953), which became the official manifesto of the revolutionary July 26th Movement, is steeped in this sacrificial tradition. In this document death is seen as a part (though importantly not the end) of the heroic patriotic struggle. From the beginning, Castro presented the

possibility of death, not as an ending that would make the preceding struggle futile and senseless, but rather as a posthumous legacy that would further aggrandise the collective ideals for which the struggle was undertaken. In *La historia me absolverá* he refers to his followers who were tortured and killed after being captured. He rejects revenge as a valid response for their deaths but instead, citing Martí, calls for a form of beatification as martyrs to the new nation:

> Para mis compañeros muertos no clamo venganza. Como sus vidas no tenían precio, no podrían pagarla con las suyas los criminales juntos. No es con sangre como pueden pagarse las vidas de los jóvenes que mueren por el bien de un pueblo; la felicidad de ese pueblo es el único precio digno que puede pagarse por ellas.
> Mis compañeros, además, no están ni olvidados ni muertos; viven hoy más que nunca y sus matadores han de ver aterrorizados cómo surge de sus cadávares heroicas el espectro victorioso de sus ideas. Que hable por mí el Apóstol: "hay un límite al llanto sobre las sepulturas de los muertos, y es el amor infinito a la patria y la gloria que se mira sobre sus cuerpos, y que no teme ni se abate ni se debilita jamás; porque los cuerpos de los mártires son el altar más hermoso de la hora".
>
> ...Cuando se muere
> En brazos de la patria agradecida,
> La muerte acaba, la prisión se rompe:
> ¡Empieza, al fin, con el morir la vida!
> (1959: 35)

The verse echoes the Cuban national anthem written by Pedro Figueredo, one of the followers of Céspedes in the First War of Independence in 1868:

> *Al combate corred bayameses*
> *Que la patria os contempla gloriosa*
> *No temáis una muerte gloriosa*
> *Que morir por la patria es vivir*
> (Quoted in Thomas 1971: 245)

Death is presented as the only alternative to a patriotic and revolutionary life and the renunciation of ideals is impossible. A life outside the revolutionary struggle is therefore not worth living, the revolution gives meaning to death itself, even ensuring eternal life in the memories of the people. The nineteenth-century revolutionaries coined the slogan "Patria o muerte", to which the post-1959 revolutionaries added "Socialismo

o muerte". I shall return to discuss this idea of life in death later when discussing post-revolutionary espionage fiction.

To sum up the component parts of the Cuban revolutionary ideology on the eve of victory in 1959, it is possible to identify the following: a desire for social justice (if not yet socialism), a commitment to national independence and sovereignty based upon a historical commitment, and a heroic (one might say epic) notion of sacrifice in the interests of securing the above. Furthermore, the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the 1950s had added a pragmatic view about how these ideals might be achieved. As Kapcia explains,

> To that largely unchanged body of values had now been added, within the ranks of the Sierra fighters, a growing realisation of the need for social reform, especially in the forgotten countryside, faith in the value of collective solidarity and a greater sense of the iniquity of, and the inevitability of a confrontation with, the pattern of US domination. (1990:172-173)

Long before the declaration of Marxist-Leninism in 1961, Cuba had developed an ideology of dissidence that comprised nationalism, social justice, self-sacrifice and a strong ethos of struggle. Kapcia notes in a later essay that *Cubanismo* also linked: 'a perceived heroic past, a suffering present and a hoped for glorious future' (1997:87). These three characteristics are embodied in a series of myths around which *Cubanismo* revolves. The first is the myth of the Platt Amendment, which encapsulated for Cubans betrayed independence.[8] The second is the idea of a generational struggle, of a continuity through time in which it behoves each generation to take up the torch of their forbears. [9] Finally, the most potent myth is that of José Martí and in particular his casting of Cuba as a biblical David, confronting the 'Goliath' to the North.

To these basic myths, the post 1959 generation has added the Myth of Che Guevara and the 'New Man' which to some extent can be seen as an intellectual distillation of

previous Cubanista elements. As early as 1960, Che was talking about a 'New Man' being forged in the revolution. Thomas C. Dalton (1993) refers to Guevara's accounts of the guerrilla struggle and how he stressed the 'asceticism' and 'stoicism' of his comrades who were 'the priests of reform' and the 'Jesuits of warfare'(1993:19-21). This mixing of religious and military metaphors draws attention to the ethic of sacrifice as an instrument in inducing the politically correct behaviour. In Guevara's view, Cuba would arrive at Communism only through the creation of a majority of individuals who would embody the values of selflessness and egalitarianism. Richard R. Fagan (1969) sums up the 'New Man' as the prime instrument in Cuba's transformation:

> In the Cuban view, getting from the past through the present to the idealised future depends on the formation of a new model personality. (1969:13)

Castro in a speech in 1964 defined the 'New Man' as follows:

> It is not a man of the jungle that we want to develop; a man of the jungle cannot be of any benefit to human society. It is not the self-centred, savage mentality that can in any sense benefit human society. [...] the old society fostered exactly those sentiments [...] we want the coming generations to receive the heritage of very different attitudes toward life, to receive the heritage of an education and a formation that is totally void of selfish sentiments. (Quoted in Fagan 1969:13)

Thus from early on, the revolution placed a heavy emphasis upon the individual's responsibility to perform in a certain way. The good citizen became defined as one who consciously tried to approximate the virtues of the 'New Man'. This meant engaging in voluntary labour, participating in the mass organisations, the militia, struggling to raise production, studying in one's spare time and being responsive to calls from the leadership.

Within the Cuban revolutionary ethos a list of qualities remains constant. These are summarised as co-operation, egalitarianism, sacrifice, service, hard work, self

improvement, obedience and incorruptibility. Fagan (1969) notes that while some of these might be classified as inherently Marxist this cannot be said of all of these qualities, some of which have more in common with Catholic and possibly even middle-class ideals. They reflect a reaction to the attitude of the former Cuban bourgeoisie whose usurious ways were the antithesis to the revolutionary ideal.

What the 'New Man' ethos did was to bring the revolution and politics into the personal and individual realm so that all aspects of life became politicised. Thus to waste materials or under-produce became not just economic misdemeanours but tantamount to counter-revolutionary behaviour. Because of the strong nationalist current in the revolution the identification of the notion of patriotism with the revolution became almost complete so that to be counter-revolutionary, not to join in, was to be unpatriotic. Participation in mass organisations such as the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) and the trades unions was essential in forming the correct attitudes. Guevara's emphasis upon moral incentives as opposed to material rewards for hard work and his idea of voluntary labour implied sacrifice that eschewed pleasure as a worthy goal. Thus the negation of pleasure and the stoic tolerance of hardship are implicit in the 'New Man' ethic.

By foregrounding strength, activity and militancy, this ethic also implies an overtly macho conception of the true revolutionary. Castro himself, in Lee Lockwood's interview with him shortly after the revolution, famously said that a homosexual could not be a true revolutionary:

> Nothing prevents a homosexual from professing revolutionary ideology and, consequently, exhibiting a correct political position. In this case he should not be considered politically negative. And yet we would never come to believe that a homosexual could embody the conditions and requirements of conduct that would enable us to consider him a true revolutionary, a true Communist

> militant. A deviation of that nature clashes with the concept we have of what a militant Communist must be.(1967: 107)

Although Castro had by the 1990s publicly tempered this view, claiming that he had always been 'absolutely opposed to any form of repression, scorn contempt or discrimination with regard to homosexuals' (Borges 1993: 121), nevertheless his earlier expression of homophobia was a characteristic feature of the first decades of the revolution which saw the exclusion and marginalisation of both women and effeminate men. [10]

The Committees for the Defence of the Revolution and the organisation of the masses in these all-inclusive vigilante groups, as well as intensifying these currents, broke down the barriers between public and private lives. Lumsden (1996; 55-80) describes how this affected gays and lesbians who were quickly identified as 'diferentes' that is, different from the revolutionary-imposed norm. At the same time there was an adherence to such 'core' values as the family based upon the heterosexual couple. In the 1990s these matters have resurfaced, in literary and artistic discourse and popular culture, including detective fiction, to which I shall return in Chapter Nine.

Thomas Dalton (1993) refers to the Cuban revolutionary ideology as 'conciencia' and sees it as an extension of Fidel Castro's Jesuit education which imbued him with altruism, a rejection of material rewards, a sense of social justice and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for an ideal, in short, the virtues extolled and exemplified by the life and works of Martí. As Castro himself has recounted:

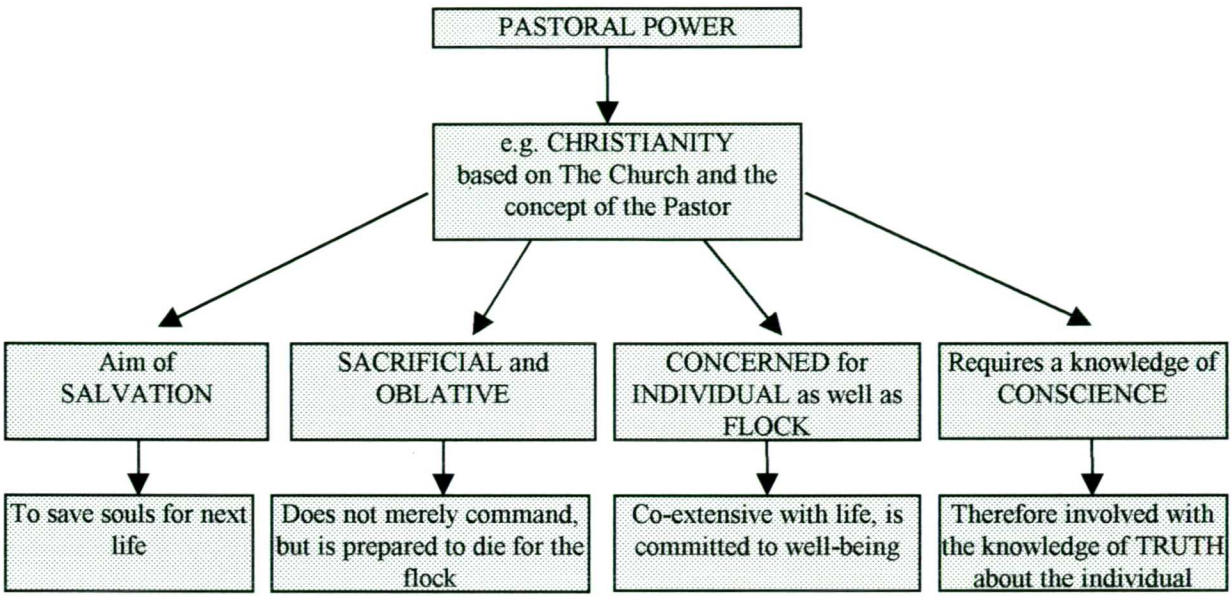
> Undoubtedly , my Jesuit teachers, especially the Spanish Jesuits, who inculcated a strong sense of personal dignity - regardless of their political ideas - influenced me... They valued character, rectitude, honesty, courage and the ability to make sacrifices... The Jesuits clearly influenced me with their strict organisation, their discipline and their values. They contributed to my development and influenced my sense of justice - which may have been rudimentary but at least it was a starting point.(1998: 71)

It can be argued that the basis for Castro's revolutionary ideology is not the atheistic philosophy of Marxist historical materialism but a religious, Christian ethic. Castro later became a Marxist, but his values were those of Christianity and Martí. Dalton agrees that such was the strength and depth of the historic process of revolutionary struggle for independence and social justice that it allowed for the construction of a new kind of state structure in Cuba which, he suggests, is similar to that which Michel Foucault referred to as 'pastoral power'. To develop this idea further, Foucault (1982: 208-226) contends that systems of 'pastoral power' such as Church institutions, unlike feudal states, are not established around the defence of a sovereign but on the defence of 'a way of life.' Pastoral power, Foucault argues, is a form of power that originated in Christian institutions and was the basis of the power of the feudal Church which occupied a space alongside, and sometimes in competition with, the political power of the sovereign. Foucault explains that the fundamental difference between pastoral and sovereign power rests in the fact that the Church:

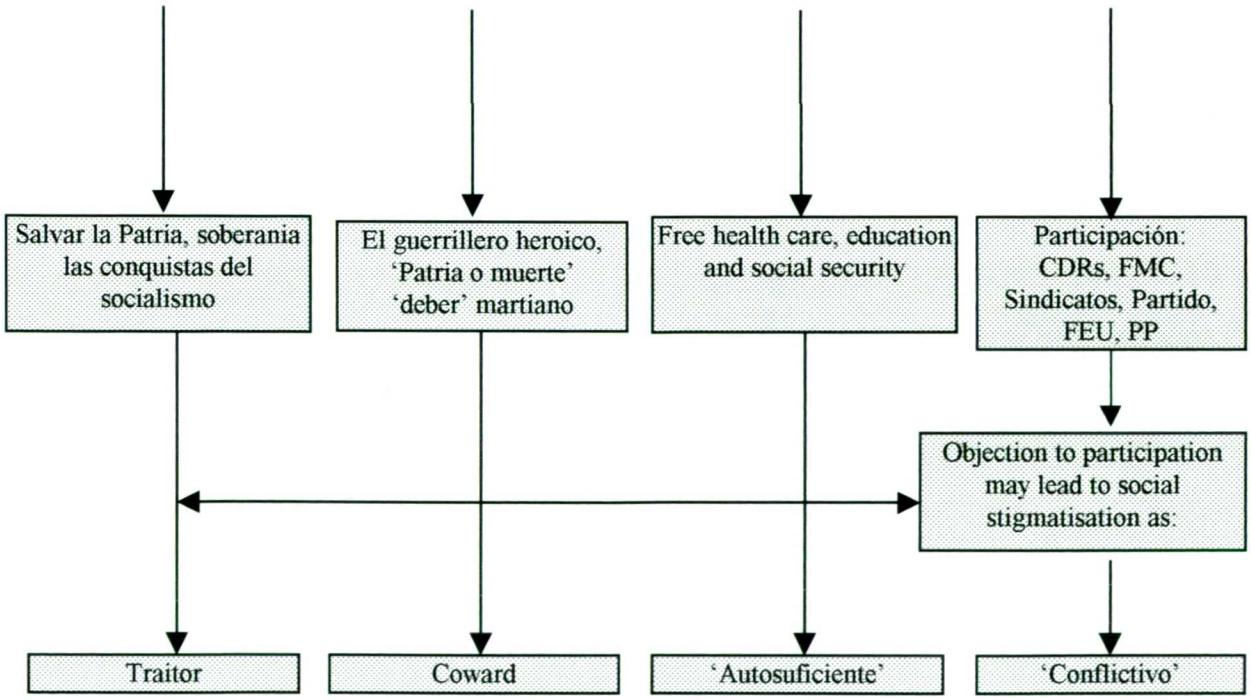
> ...postulates the principle that certain individuals can, by their religious quality, serve others not as princes, magistrates, prophets, fortune tellers, benefactors, educationalists and so on, but as pastors. However this word designates a very special form of power. (1982:214)

Foucault's structure of pastoral power is represented here as a diagram (diagram 1a):

1a. Foucault's structure of Pastoral Power
Diagram by Stephen Wilkinson

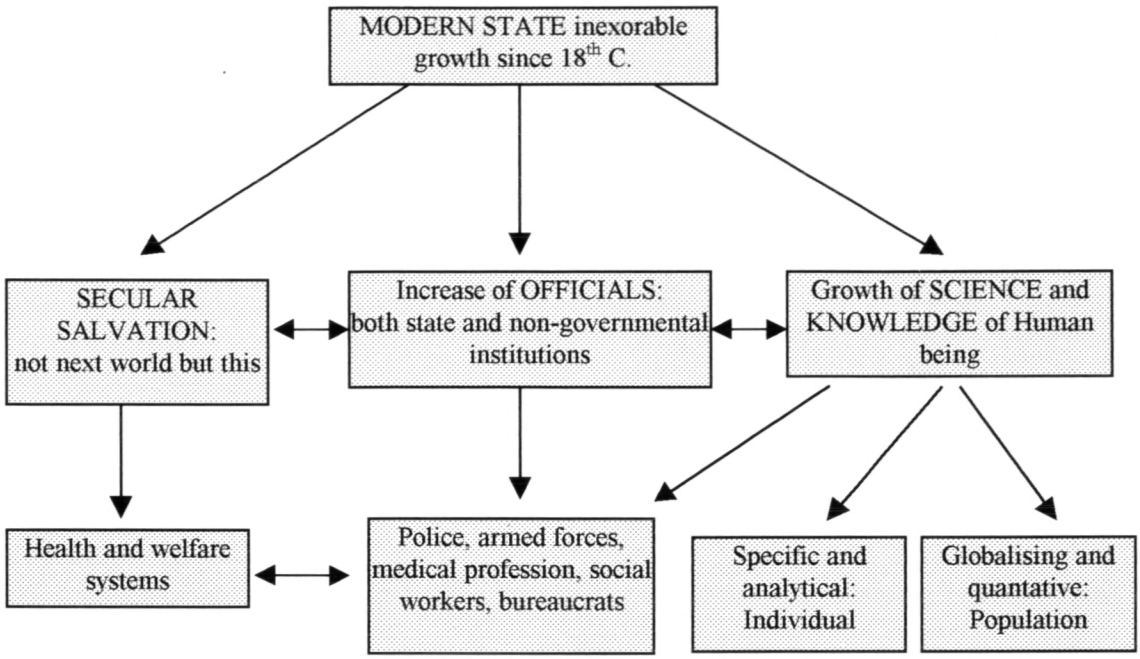


1b. Cuba's structure of Pastoral Power



Unlike the sovereign (whose subjects were supposed to die for him) the pastor was expected to die for his flock if necessary. The pastor was also concerned with the project of salvation. Foucault sees the Reformation as the culmination of a struggle against this form of power. Since the eighteenth century, he suggests, the state has slowly incorporated and adopted these characteristics. In the modern state, however, the aim of salvation has shifted from the next life to this in the form of health care and protection of a 'standard of living'. The number of officials has increased with the extension of the state and public institutions, so that the modern 'pastors' are now, teachers, doctors, police, social workers, psychiatrists etc. In addition, knowledge about the community and the individual has increased through the application of science to the process. In other words, the modern state is characterised by an increase in the application of subjectivising power, which is as individualising as it is totalizing in its effect and scope. I have represented this also as a diagram (diagram 2) When this model is compared to the revolutionary Cuban state, it is clear that the Cuban state has developed all these characteristics to a high degree through its comprehensive health care, education and social security programmes. For example, the family doctor programme provides one doctor and two nurses for every 120 families (MacDonald 1995: 21). These 'agents of state health care' live in the local community, and are indeed often compared to 'pastors':

> At the operational level, every GP lives in the community he serves and, in a city, such a community would be no more than a few blocks! This means that people are always in contact with their doctor. He/she in fact, often spends a part of each day making unsolicited calls on his/her patients - rather like the old style parish priest doing his rounds. (MacDonald 1995: 21)



And this implies that power of a pastoral type, which over centuries - for more than a millennium - had been linked to a defined religious institution, suddenly spread out into the whole social body: it found support in a multitude of institutions. And, instead of a pastoral power and a political power, more or less linked to each other, more or less rival, there was an individualising "tactic" which characterised a series of powers: those of the family, medicine, psychiatry, education and employers.
Foucault 'The Subject and Power' (1982: 215)

2. Foucault's structure of modern pastoral power.
Diagram by Stephen Wilkinson

The diagram (1a/b) of pastoral power shows how closely this model fits the Cuban situation. As Foucault and Dalton argue, this kind of power is characterised by the exercise of power through the consciences of its subjects and depends upon individuals living up to and abiding by certain truths of conscience. Apparently, the Cuban state has managed to reconstruct the feudal system of pastoral power in a modern and secular form. If we look at each of the component parts of the structure and apply it to Cuba we find the following correspondences (diagram 1b). Firstly, in addition to the secular aim of

caring for the well-being of the population in this life, the Cuban revolutionary state can add the objective of salvation of the nation from external domination. In this it is helped by the United States' policy of embargo and destabilisation. A purpose underlined by the current official rhetoric is to 'save the achievements of socialism.' Thus Fidel Castro, in 1995, explained why the state had to bring in economic reforms which legalised the dollar and invited foreign capital into the country:

> All this is costing us dearly [...] but [...] in the face of very strong resistance from the United States, we have to do it, there's no alternative. [...] We have to be honest, we have gone down this road basically because it was the only alternative for saving the revolution and saving the conquests of Socialism.(Lyons ed.1997: 51)

What Castro refers to as the 'conquests of Socialism' are the very structures that are the expression of the third pillar of pastoral power: the concern for the well-being of the individual and the community through free health care, which formed the basis of the original revolutionary platform in the 1950s.

However, the crucial factor that characterises the Cuban state is the notion of sacrifice forming a core element of Cuban revolutionary ideology. The revolution is maintained by the weight of a powerful moral force in that the revolutionary ideal of a courageous, selfless individual who aspires to virtue and is prepared to die if necessary to defend the poor, implies that at the very least what is required is participation in the project. Participation is encouraged through the organisations which make up the institutional structure of the Cuban state: the CDRs, the FMC women's organisation, the trade unions, the students' federation etc. The family doctor and organisations like the CDR ensure that the individual in Cuban society cannot escape scrutiny. As Foucault argues, the exercise of power is an inducement upon others to act in a certain way; thus Cubans are subjected to a strong measure of individualised pressure. As a positive

inducement to action, there can be nothing more morally attractive than to identify with such an altruistic struggle. The use of violence is not necessary if the individual is subjected to the weight of public shame and the moral inducement provided by guilt in such as way as to bring about required behaviour. One may be categorised as 'bien integrado' or 'integrado' depending upon one's level of participation. However, given that the aim of the state is purportedly altruistic, that is, to 'save the nation', then to actively object to participating in any way is to run the risk of being labelled a traitor, an egoist or a coward. This system of power works so effectively that even those who might privately be opposed to it, publicly take part.

In addition, it is difficult for opposition movements to emerge. The structure of power means that such movements will be opposed at a local, immediate level before the state's repressive apparatus needs to become directly involved. The consequence is that the Cuban citizen is subjected to a form of power that is applied to all areas of everyday life. Foucault defines as subjection:

> This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual. marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. (1982: 212)

I have developed this Foucauldian analysis of the Cuban state and the way it functions in order to distinguish my approach from the numerous analyses of Cuban revolutionary society and power organisation that are based on traditional Marxist or liberal points of view. I find this approach more conducive to my purposes in the sense that it shows how far the individual is caught up in social arrangements and avoids unnecessary political polarisation. The Cuban revolution is based upon a forward looking ideology which, like the Church, lays emphasis upon action in the present being aimed at

guaranteeing some future utopia. It has evolved a kind of secularised religion based upon Christian ethics of sacrifice and salvation and Marxist-Leninist ideas of anti-imperialism and egalitarianism. However, this has had the effect of creating a society which is subjected to a huge amount of surveillance, in which the individual is conscious of being watched and is often called upon to watch others. This is of profound significance for this study. Obviously art in such a society will be affected because at the very least, individual artists will be subjected to the same moral restraints as everyone else. Art cannot be 'free' in the Western liberal sense of the word in such a society. The development therefore of a genre such as detective fiction is inextricably involved with this ideology. In Section Two, I return to the growth of the detective narrative and how, after the revolution, it was initially fostered as a means to inculcate the revolutionary values I have described here. (Interestingly, this will be shown to have involved the deliberate inclusion of surveillance organisations such as the CDRs, in detective stories as examples of correct behaviour). I shall also discuss the way in which the society produced by this structure of power militated against the creation of a viable detective genre for reasons intrinsic to the genre itself. By limiting individualism, Cuban society and culture also limited the possibilities for the artistic representation of individualist heroes, a factor which works against the creation of credible and attractive fictional detectives. In time, this led to novelists, among whom Leonardo Padura Fuentes stands out, becoming concerned with this very problem and striving to alter the genre. In Section Three, I shall discuss his work in the light of this problem and show how the struggle of the individual and the personal against the collective and public is foregrounded in his work.

Because Padura's novels and the detective writing tradition that preceded it are so closely related to the Cuban cultural climate, it is necessary to conclude this first section of the thesis by examining the ways in which the cultural climate has changed as the

revolution developed. The next chapter discusses these changes and the conflicts within Cuban cultural policy that often surface as identifiable themes and motifs in Cuban detective literature.

Notes

[1] The revolution was declared Socialist on April 16th 1961, the day of the Bay of Pigs invasion.
[2] Sartre published 16 articles on his visit to Cuba in the French daily newspaper *France-Soir*. They were translated and published in Spanish as one volume in Havana and Buenos Aires. All quotations are from the Havana edition.
[3] The study of Cuban revolutionary ideology should not be made without reference to the 'state of siege' to which the island has been subjected by the United States. A chronology of the violent attacks emanating from the US is included. See appendix 1.
[4] The Comités de la Defensa de la Revolución (CDRs) were founded in September 1960 in response to bombing and sabotage attacks. Fagan (1969: 69-103) details their history. The CDRs were the first mass organisation set up by the revolution (the unified Communist Party was not formed until 1965) and incorporated ordinary citizens in vigilance activities.
[5] See, for example, Theodore Draper, *Castro's Revolution: Myths and Realities* (1962) and *Castroism: Theory and Practice* (1965).
[6] Antonio Maceo (1848-96), 'the bronze Titan' led an army composed of mixed races who called themselves *Mambises*, a word of African origin. In 1878 at the Protest of Baragua, Maceo refused to sign the peace settlement with Spain.
[7] Martí was killed fighting Spanish troops in 1895. The founder of the Communist Party and leader of the student rebellion of 1933, Julio Antonio Mella, was assassinated in Mexico. The founder of the Ortodoxo Party, Eddy Chibás, shot himself in protest at the corruption in political life in 1952 while speaking to the nation on radio.
[8] The Platt Amendment was a clause in the 1902 Cuban constitution which gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuban affairs at any time it felt that US interests were threatened. It was revoked in 1934 following the 1933 uprising but its memory still persists. The adjective *Plattista* is often used to describe US policies which are aimed at limiting Cuba's sovereignty or to describe Cubans who agree with the US line.
[9] In 1953 Fidel Castro and his supporters who attacked the Moncada garrison in Santiago, called themselves *La generación del centenario* because that year was the centenary of Martí's birth.
[10] See Chapter 9 for further discussion.

Chapter 3

Ideology and intervention: Cuban revolutionary cultural policy

Cuba's revolution, like all revolutions, in attempting to create a new society based upon different values from those of the system it replaced, ran up against opposition from sectors that resisted change. In Cuba's case this was exacerbated by the island's proximity to its hegemonic neighbour, the United States, and further complicated by the ideological struggles of the cold war. Such factors obviously had an effect on the revolution's cultural policy and this chapter is intended to clarify a key question that has repeatedly arisen throughout the history of the revolution. The question concerns the extent to which Cuba adopted what is often referred to as a 'Stalinist' approach to cultural control, a value system more accurately labelled 'socialist realism'. Many observers, particularly those ideologically opposed to the revolution, insist that this is an accurate assessment, although, as I shall show, this view does not stand up to scrutiny. As I have shown in the last chapter, Cuba's revolutionary ideology is organic and differs markedly from that which is usually defined as 'Stalinist' and accordingly, the way in which culture is controlled is different. While artistic endeavour in Cuba might be constrained in ways that differ from western liberal societies, I intend to show that on the whole Cuba has avoided the extremes of 'socialist realism'. This is not to suggest that Cuban cultural policy has not witnessed periods of intense control. There have been years when strict censorship was applied, but these periods have not endured. Also, unlike 'Stalinist' regimes, Cuban cultural policy has been the subject of periods of intense public debate in which artists and writers have themselves taken part. Indeed, there are five recognisable periods in which cultural policy changed. These are: 1959-61, when

there was an immediate post-revolutionary outpouring of creativity and little control; 1961-71 when the revolution applied a policy of directing art and cultural production in its favour while avoiding draconian attempts to control; 1971-76 when centralised planning on a Soviet model was adopted and ideological conformity became entrenched, characterised by anti-western and homophobic tendencies; 1976-91 when the excesses of the preceding five years were gradually recognised and a reassessment took place, and finally, the post 1991 period in which the revolutionary system has been challenged by the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is this period in which Leonardo Padura Fuentes, among other artists, has managed to establish a space in which to create work that not only has liberated artistic expression, but has also referenced the previous periods of control in a polemical manner. The latest period will be discussed at length in Section Three. This chapter will explain how the earlier periods arose by looking at the causal events. In each case, it is significant that the revolutionary leadership can be seen to be reacting to incidents or circumstances often beyond its control and from outside the country. In the area of cultural policy, as with the economic, the Cuban revolution is never free from the situation in which it faces a struggle for survival. In Gramscian terms it can be said that the cultural sphere in Cuba has been the site of an intense struggle for hegemony between the forces of the revolution and the forces of liberalism both within and outside the island. It is this struggle which resurfaces throughout the debates concerning cultural policy. I shall illustrate how these debates in Cuba have consistently pitted the leadership's perceived need to ensure the survival of the revolution and the propagation of its values, against the liberal notion of artistic freedom. The notion of praxis articulated by Sartre in 1960 is still a meaningful concept to explain the ways in which Cuba has pragmatically adapted its cultural policy to deal with the challenges it has faced.

An example of such pragmatism and the way in which debate is engaged in Cuba arose in the late 1990s as increasing artistic freedom brought some creators into conflict with more orthodox elements in society. The January-February 1997 issue of the Cuban cultural bimonthly magazine, *La Gaceta de Cuba,* devoted 18 pages to what it called 'una polémica necesaria' about the nature of the theatre and the role it should play. The echoes of this debate it said:

> [...] han transcendido los límites del movimiento escénico hasta implicar al campo cultural en su totalidad, y a otros sectores del país. (*La Gaceta* 1, 1997: 40)

The issue included eleven pieces, consisting of transcripts of radio discussions, letters to the editors of the organs involved, articles from various critics, and a long essay by the Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto. Together they comprise a debate ongoing in the national media since the autumn of 1996. This debate revolved around two crucial questions which echo the problems identified by Gramsci as discussed in the Chapter 1 above: what are the limits of freedom of expression, and what is the correct role of art in a revolutionary society? In many ways the issues raised were a rehash of a debate which has taken place within Cuba since 1960.

The controversy concerning the theatre began in October 1996 when Jorge Rivas Rodríguez, the theatre critic for the trades union newspaper, *Trabajadores,* reviewed the Camagüey theatre festival and attacked two plays: *Los equívocos morales*, by the Teatro Escambray, and *El Arca* by the experimental theatre group, Teatro del Obstáculo. These works, he said, were characterised by:

> [...] sus marcadas y burdas intenciones en sus presupuestos éticos, al sustentarse básicamente en discursos llevados a un tono lacerante, poco imaginativo y abiertamente agresivo, en los que se insertan irrespetuosos actos en torno a los símbolos patrios, como en *Los equívocos morales*, del grupo Escambray, con un despótico, denigrante e injustificado tratamiento a la bandera cubana; y en *El*

> *Arca*, del Teatro del Obstáculo, en la grosera manipulación de la figura del Che. (*La Gaceta* 1, 1997: 41)

The plays offended deeply held sentiments which were explained in the previous chapter: principally nationalism and the figure of Che Guevera. What angered Rivas Rodríguez was a scene in *Los equívocos morales* in which an actress, draped in the Cuban flag, rolls around on the floor. This he interpreted as disrespectful and unpermissible. In *El Arca,* he disliked a debate that takes place within the mind of one of the characters, a young girl, which centres on the conflict between the schoolchildren's motto 'Ser como el Che' and the fact that her older sister has taken up prostitution in order to obtain necessities for the family. Rivas Rodríguez was reinforced in his criticisms by his colleague on *Trabajadores,* Renato Recio, who wrote:

> Puede parecer dogmático, esquemático y hasta muy inoportuno, pero yo sigo pensando que si una obra de teatro se representa, por ejemplo, a una pionera que se pregunta: ¿por qué una jinetera no puede ser como el Che?, ese hecho merece, cuando menos, una reflexión de los especialistas y una inquietud manifiesta de los que consideran, como yo, que hay cosas tan sagradas que són más sagradas que el arte. (*La Gaceta* 1, 1997: 46)

Here, the referencing to the national symbols as 'sacred' calls to mind the importance of nationalism in, and the quasi-religious nature of, Cuban ideology discussed in Chapter 2. Also, implicit in the paragraph is the conflict centred on the theoretical debate discussed in Chapter 1, that is, whether art, artistic creation and the individual should be independent from society and therefore not subject to political restraints of any kind, or whether art and the individual are part of society and therefore should be held accountable, to some extent, to society for their responsibility in the formation of social consciousness. In a revolutionary society such as Cuba, with a programme of transformation and an ideology as described in Chapter 2, it is perhaps inevitable that the latter view should prevail. But the question remains of what should be done with

recalcitrant artists who do not share this point of view? As Gramsci noted (see Chapter 1, p 22), the politicians will be always be dissatisfied with the artists because of their different points of view, and this debate in 1990s Cuba is typical of the kind of problems that emerge when the state becomes involved in the management of artistic creation.

Recio inflamed the debate when he spoke on the Radio Rebelde current affairs programme , 'Hablando claro,' and suggested that the plays were appropriate for a 'petty bourgeois' audience but not for 'workers' and reaffirmed a distinctly proscriptive attitude towards art:

> Nosotros tenemos una Constitución, la Constitución Socialista de nuestro país que fue aprobada por todo el pueblo cubano en un plebiscito ejemplar, con un más del noventa por ciento de participación popular, que aprobó esa Constitución que establece que esta es una sociedad socialista, que esto es un Estado Socialista, y que, digamos, los medios de comunicación, el arte, la vida educadora en general tiene que estar al servicio de los principios generales de esa sociedad y de esa Constitución. (*La Gaceta* 1, 1997: 41)

In reply, Rafael González, the director of the Escambray group, wrote a letter to *Trabajadores* in which he accused Rivas Rodríguez of being the only critic to have been offended by it in countless performances. He also accused Recio of criticising the play without having seen it and both critics for a lack of artistic analysis (Letter published in *La Gaceta* 1, 1997: 43-44).

The *La Gaceta* treatment of the debate concludes with a polemical article by the Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto, entitled: '"La Cigarra y la hormiga": un remake al final del milenio.' As the title implies, Prieto invokes the fable about the cricket and the ant in an attempt to judiciously calm the waters by insisting that there should be no difference between the workers and intellectuals in Cuba, that such distinctions are false in any case since many workers are also intellectuals and many intellectuals carry out physical labour. In his opinion, the cultural policy of the revolution should follow Martí's

slogan: 'Ser culto es ser libre' and that it is the responsibility of everyone to help raise the cultural level of all Cubans. On the question of revolutionary cultural policy, he leaves no doubt as to his views:

> [...] no existe ninguna política cultural alternativa a la política martiana y fidelista que se inauguró en 1961 con *Palabras a los intelectuales.* (*La Gaceta* 1, 1997: 54)

This statement begs the question: What is Martían cultural policy? Before discussing the formulation of Fidel's famous *Palabras*, the views of José Martí, who, as we saw in the last chapter, had a major influence in informing the ideology of the revolution, will be examined.

One of the difficulties with Martí is that he died before his dream of independence was realised and therefore we do not have the benefit of seeing what he would have done in practice. He wrote large quantities of broad-ranging and often highly moralising texts: letters, poems, articles, treatises, polemics, speeches, plays in verse and children's stories that provide tremendous scope for scholarship. That Martí was a patriot and a humanist passionately concerned with the perfection of humanity cannot be contested, but as to exactly what he thought on the question of a cultural policy is another matter. As a journalist and a poet, Martí held strong views on the freedom of expression believing it to be essential in a free society. In this he was no doubt influenced by the strict censorship imposed in Cuba by the Spanish colonial authorities. He was jailed at the age of 17 for writing a seditious letter. However, to conclude from this that Martí would be automatically opposed to any political restraints being placed on the artist in a revolutionary Cuba would be too simplistic. As John M. Kirk (1983), Hans-Otto Dill (1975) and Peter Turton (1986) have all pointed out, the immense volume of Martí's writings express views that developed over time and therefore there are often contradictory elements to his thought. Thus, as Kirk notes (1983: 75-76) while Martí

consistently argued for the freedom of expression he also qualified it with the need for criticism to be constructive in the struggle for unity:

> Los pueblos han de vivir criticándose, porque la crítica es la salud; pero con un solo pecho y una sola mente. (Martí 1979b: 525)

According to Prieto, Martí, as an artist committed to the liberation of Cuba, made his work support that end. He placed loyalty to the *patria* above all else and was intolerant of those who did not share this aim. It is this notion of a freedom of expression qualified by the need to defend the *patria* to which Prieto is alluding when referring to the policy elaborated by Fidel Castro in 1961 as 'martiano'.

This policy is summed up in a single phrase:

> [...] dentro la Revolución todo; contra la Revolución, nada (1977: 17)

The phrase is effective in that allows for the possibility of a broad spectrum of ideas within the revolution while defiantly proscribing that which is explicitly against it. The problem is deciding what is or is not *against* the revolution and to a large degree, exactly who makes the decision. Different people have been in charge of cultural affairs in Cuba and cultural policy has passed through changes depending on who was given responsibility. There have been functionaries who have encouraged the kind of policies advocated by Zhdanov, but they have not prevailed. Cuban cultural policy has managed to be resolved through debate. This is not to say that errors have not been made. Some writers went into exile and others have suffered varying degrees of censorship. But the issues surrounding Cuba's cultural policy have been influenced by the ideological and at times physically violent confrontation with the United States, whose policy has been consistently to foment confrontation within Cuban society at all levels including the

intellectual and artistic community. It is within this context that Cuba's policy must be assessed.

Palabras a los intelectuales aimed to resolve a confrontation that took place within weeks of the US backed invasion of the Bay of Pigs (April 1961), at a time when the country was under the threat of military invasion. In such a context it is perhaps surprising that the leadership could indulge in a lengthy debate with its intellectuals over the censorship of a film that was seen as unpatriotic.

Castro's words were spoken at the end of a three-day debate at a meeting of writers and artists at the Biblioteca Nacional that had been called following the refusal by the newly created cinema institute, ICAIC, to grant a licence to the short documentary film *PM*, produced by Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal. Castro sided with ICAIC in the dispute and the film was not given a licence to be distributed in the cinema. The incident has been seen as the revolution's first act of censorship and the earliest evidence of a power struggle between 'Stalinist' hard-liners and the liberal wing of the cultural establishment, from which the latter emerged temporarily defeated. Following their marginalisation as champions of the film, the leaders of the *Lunes de la Revolución* supplement, including Carlos Franquí, Sabá's brother Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and the film-makers themselves, all left Cuba at different times and have become outspoken opponents of the revolution and Fidel Castro in particular. Cabrera Infante, for example, has written that the affair was a Stalinist plot cooked up by the then head of the Consejo de Cultura, Edith García Buchaca, and the head of ICAIC, Alfredo Guevara, both of whom were members of the old Cuban Communist Party (1994:66-70, 343-346).[1] Certainly, Cabrera Infante's charges of 'Stalinism' might be justified given the nature of García Buchaca's views as expressed in her essay on Marxist cultural policy, *La teoría de la superstructura,* published in the same year as the *PM* episode in

which she quotes Stalin (1961: 6) and one of the authors of the worst excesses of Soviet 'socialist realism,' Zhdanov, (1961:29). She even goes so far as to advocate socialist realism as the best way forward for Cuban cultural policy:

> Para los marxistas, el realismo socialista es la vía más adecuada, el método mejor para el logro de un arte verdadero. (1961: 37)

However it would be wrong to conclude that García Buchaca's views prevailed at that time. The *Palabras a los intelectuales* themselves clearly warn against dogmatism in relation to the arts. Rather than ushering in an era of socialist realism in Cuba the *Palabras* ensured that such a policy would not immediately take hold even if 'defending the revolution' meant limits might have to be placed upon artists and artistic creation. Accounts of the meetings which led up to the *Palabras* by insiders such as Carlos Franquí and Cabrera Infante are not reliable versions of the events, as these people all too obviously display a personal hatred of Alfredo Guevara and Edith García Buchaca.[2] Cabrera Infante has compared Fidel Castro to Hitler.[3] Outsider commentators, such as K.S. Karol, draw heavily on Franquí's version of events. Karol also betrays a hatred of 'Stalinism' no doubt coloured by his own experiences as a Polish refugee from Stalin's Soviet Union.[4] None of these versions make sense in the light of an objective reading of the *Palabras* and all the above accounts decontextualise the meetings from their historical and political juncture. This 'crisis' in the arts occurred only six weeks after the Bay of Pigs invasion and Fidel Castro's declaration of the Marxist-Leninist nature of the revolution. Given the intense pressure exerted by the United States upon the Cuban Government at the time, rather than hard-line, Castro's words may be read as a model of restraint.

In this particular case, Castro defended the right of ICAIC, as a government institution, to deny the licence for the film on the grounds that it was carrying out its

legitimate function. He went on to define what he thought future criteria ought to be in making decisions of this nature. He defined the question as 'el problema de la libertad de la creación artística' (1977:7). Cabrera Infante and the *PM* lobby argued that their freedom of expression was curtailed and that they were resisting censorship imposed by the 'Stalinists' at ICAIC and in the Consejo de Cultura. But as Michael Chanan (1985: 100-109), in his account of the incident, has pointed out, this was a somewhat hollow complaint since the film had already been shown on TV. They could hardly claim to be defending their right to distribute a film which had already been broadcast. ICAIC delayed granting the film a licence to be shown in cinemas. It seems that the protest from the Cabrera Infante group was therefore at least partly to blame for the dispute that ensued.

In the *Palabras,* Castro points out that the revolution in Cuba occurred precipitously and without the time to gestate social and cultural policies. As Sartre had observed (see Chapter 2), the revolutionary government was having to meet obstacles as it went along and to find its way through them. A meeting such as the one in which he was speaking was one such example. In response to those who believed the revolution was won and that the only remaining problem to be solved was artistic freedom, Castro emphasised the revolution as a process, still under threat.

> ¿O es que nosotros creemos que hemos ganado ya todas las batallas revolucionarias? ¿Es que nosotros creemos que la Revolución no tiene peligros? ¿Cuál debe ser hoy la primera preocupación de todo ciudadano? ¿La preocupación de que la Revolución vaya a desbordar sus medidas, de que la Revolución vaya a asfixiar el arte, de que la Revolución vaya a asfixiar el genio creador de nuestros ciudadanos, o la preocupación no ha de ser la Revolución misma? ¿Los peligros reales o imaginarios que pueden amenazar el espíritu creador o los peligros que puedan amenazar la Revolución misma? (1977: 10)

The first task for revolutionaries was to defend the revolution. He pointed out that there was no argument over artistic form (thus implying that all forms of art were admissible, not only socialist realist works), but over content. Castro stated categorically that the revolution defended liberty; it had liberated the country and could therefore not be against creative expression. Fears on that count were unfounded and unnecessary. Those who might be concerned or afraid were those who were uncertain about their own revolutionary convictions. For Castro, as explained in Chapter 2, to be a revolutionary meant to be willing to sacrifice even one's artistic freedom in order for the revolution to survive and for the well-being of the people.

Castro also addressed the concerns of a number of the Catholic contributors to the debate who wished to know if the non-materialist nature of their philosophy would be permissible within a now openly Marxist-Leninist revolution. They supported the revolution in its economic and social aims but were not in agreement with the philosophical grounds. For Castro, this was a serious problem.

> [...] es un deber de la Revolución preocuparse por la situación de esos artistas y de esos escritores, porque la Revolución debe tener la aspiración de que no sólo marchen junto a ella todos los Revolucionarios[...] la Revolución no puede renunciar a que todos los hombres y mujeres honestos, sean o no escritores o artistas, marchen juntos a ella. (1977: 16)

But only those who were irredeemably against the revolution should be excluded from the revolution:

> La Revolución sólo debe renunciar a aquellos que sean incorregibles reaccionarios, que sean incorregiblemente contrarrevolucionarios. Y la Revolución tiene que tener una política contra esa parte del pueblo[...] la Revolución tiene ...debe actuar de manera que todo ese sector de artistas y de intelectuales que no sean genuinamente revolucionarios, encuentre dentro de la Revolución un campo donde trabajar y crear y que su espíritu creador, aún cuando no sean escritores o artistas Revolucionarios, tenga oportunidad y libertad para expresarse, dentro de la revolución todo; contra la revolución nada, porque la Revolución

> también tiene derechos y el primer derecho de la Revolución es existir y frente al derecho de la Revolución de ser y de existir, nadie. (1977: 17)

Thus in its full context, Castro's famous slogan contains the notion that there is space within the revolution for criticism. In the words of Carlos Rafael Rodríguez writing 25 years later:

> La divisa no es 'los que no están con nosotros están contra nosotros' sino 'los que no están contra nosotros están con nosotros.' (1988: 6)

Here again is clear evidence of the revolutionary ideology discussed in Chapter 2 in which collectivity is privileged over and above the individual. The individual is not completely repressed but individual interests are always subordinated to the general well-being and the survival of the revolution.

Castro's words were not the end of the matter. A debate about aspects of cultural policy followed. The Cuban critic José Antonio Portuondo (1979: 27) notes the 1963 debate between Alfredo Guevara and the head of the Communist Party, Blas Roca. about whether or not evidently bourgeois films such as Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* should be shown in Cuba. Interestingly, Guevara held out for the right of Cuban audiences to see such films (Chanan 1985: 142-3). These discussions, however, unlike the *PM* episode, were not of a violent nature because the opposing sides were not threatening the revolution, but merely placing differing emphasis on the way Marxists should approach their work:

> Debatimos ampliamente los problemas sin que la sangre llegara al río, y sin que las opiniones significaran, en ningún momento, un enfrentamiento a la estéstica marxista, sino modos opuestos de interpretar sus principios cardinales. (1979: 29)

The debate was a complex one about the role of the individual in society and the function of art and clearly touched upon questions discussed in relation to Gramsci in Chapter 1.

The intellectuals were attempting to accommodate Marxist notions of cultural praxis to a previous liberal bourgeois ethos. A conflict emerges between the state and cultural practitioners still imbued with liberal bourgeois values. However, until 1971 this did not take on Stalinist characteristics. This is where critics such as Cabrera Infante are wrong when they suggest that the revolution was Stalinist from the beginning. Portuondo explains that the cultural attitude of the Cuban revolution was fundamentally different from that which characterised, 'ciertas países socialistas más viejos' (1979: 32), a view made clear by Che Guevara who summed up the discussions about the correct 'Marxist-Leninist interpretation' in his essay *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* published in 1965. In this famous piece, Guevara explains that the concept of artistic freedom as propounded by bourgeois intellectuals is really a false notion since under capitalism the artist is enslaved by the market. Whereas under the bourgeois system it was possible to create a rebellious art, this was really a flight from reality rather than a real confrontation with the forces of oppression. For Guevara, the error of some artists within the Cuban revolution was to adopt a similar attitude towards the new revolutionary society, that is, to take the view that the true role of the artist is to rebel against orthodoxy regardless of its political nature. This might be justified in bourgeois society but not in a Socialist revolution. In their turn, according to Guevara, some Socialists responded in an inappropriate manner:

> En países que pasaron por un proceso similar se pretendió combatir estas tendencias con un dogmatismo exagerado. (1970: 369)

Guevara warns that in such countries (it is assumed he is referring to countries in the Soviet bloc) culture became almost taboo and was limited to a mechanical reproduction of reality. He justifies such errors as being the consequence of the inexperience of Socialism and the incapacity of intellectuals, educated within the old society, to readily

accept and conform to the new. This illustrates the conflict between the politician (Guevara) and the artist which Gramsci described (see Chapter 1). Guevara seems to be unaware of Gramsci's view that it is inevitable that the politician will be dissatisfied with the artist because of their different world outlooks. Guevara clings to the idea that this conflict will be resolved once a new kind of artist emerges. Nonetheless, Guevara recognises the problem that new artists cannot be created and must somehow arise organically in the new society. In his view, it is the duty of the Communist Party to make sure that future generations are educated to behave in new ways by adopting new methods. But Guevara specifically warns against the adoption of socialist realism as the means to do this:

> Se busca entonces la simplificación, lo que entiende todo el mundo, que es lo que entienden los funcionarios. Se anula la auténtica investigación artística y se reduce el problema de la cultura general a una apropiación del presente socialista y del pasado muerto (por tanto, no peligroso). Así nace el realismo socialista sobre las bases del arte del siglo pasado. (1970: 370)

Like Gramsci, Guevara argues for a multiple approach; the revolution needed to incorporate all forms of art, even nineteenth-century realism should have its place, but within the context of a revolutionary ethos. The problem as he saw it was that the artists and intellectuals themselves were not 'auténticamente revolucionarios' because they still carried with them vestiges of Cuba's neo-colonial past, the duty of revolutionaries was to ensure that the new generations would grow up free from these reactionary traits. The role of art and culture was to ensure therefore that true revolutionaries will be formed for the future.

The debate continues today. Castro's speech and Guevara's essay are both alluded to more than 30 years later by the current Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto, who reiterates exactly the same sentiments in trying to settle a similar, if less portentous,

disagreement between artists and critics. In response to the controversy over the theatre, Prieto argues for unity between the intellectuals themselves, and between intellectuals and the rest of Cuban society. He stresses that, in general, Cuba's cultural policy has been characterised by its openness, plurality and anti-dogmatism which contrasts strongly with the countries of the old socialist bloc:

> El 'socialismo real' europeo logró liquidar aquella brillante fusión entre la vanguardía política y la vanguardía artística que caracterizó en los días de Lenin a la Revolución de Octubre. Represión, censura, 'realismo socialista' y otros muchos métodos de mutilación, se emplaron sistemáticamente contra la libertad creativa, y se fue diseñando el espacio ideal para que florecieran el oportunismo, la simulación y un pensamiento anti-socialista, reaccionario, hechizado por el 'paraíso occidental'. (*La Gaceta*: 1997: 54)

In his overview of Cuba's cultural policy, Prieto mentions certain "errores y momentos 'grises' y 'oscuros'" but adds that these were not 'errores estratégicos' and that periods of rectification had ensured that there was no fundamental damage to the unity between the political and artistic vanguards. However, Prieto is diplomatic with the truth. There are certainly people within the artistic vanguard of Cuba today, including Leonardo Padura Fuentes, who would place more emphasis upon the damage that the 'errors' made and indeed might even go so far as to use the adjective 'Stalinist' to describe the turn which cultural policy took in the 1970s. The point is that while there has been a consistent rejection of socialist realism in Cuba, theoretically at least in practice there have been times when strict parameters have been placed on artistic expression. These are what Prieto alludes to as the 'momentos oscuros'

Such a 'momento gris' was the period 1971-1976 known as *'el quinquenio gris'*, an epoch of stultifying governmental control of cultural output which followed the First Congress of Education and Culture. This period is crucially significant for the study of Cuban revolutionary culture because its effects are still felt. It is also particularly

important to the study of Cuban detective fiction because it was in this period that the post-revolutionary genre came into being, a fact that undoubtedly affected its character as shall be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6. During this period a purge of homosexuals practically decimated the theatre, and all manner of foreign (in particular what was considered western bourgeois) influences were ruled as undesirable. The damage this caused is evidenced by the ill will many writers still show towards the revolutionary government. For example, in the first edition of *Encuentro de Cultura,* a Cuban arts review launched in Madrid in 1996, the author, Eliseo Alberto writes:

> El Congreso de Educación y Cultura llenó el país de ratas y alimañas. Comenzaba el Quinquenio Gris. ¿Comenzaba? Haré lo humanamente posible para que la cólera no rija mis recuerdos y me haga calificar con palabras demasiado crudas a los promotores de aquel auténtico patíbulo de la cultura nacional. No sé si pueda. Verdugos a sueldo de incapaces y tenientes alcoholizados por los licores de la envidia se atrevieron a humillar a prestigiosos intelectuales y artistas, sin distinción de origen ni de nacionalidad, y convirtieron nuestros teatros, galerias y editoriales en letrinas donde ellos, y sólo ellos, nadaban a gusto como renacuajos en un mar de babas. (1996: 36)

Alberto describes the legacy of the period:

> Lo que en verdad resultó gris, fue, y es todavía, un estilo de trabajo autoritario y paternalista, una deformidad del pensamiento oficial que lo incapacita para admitir desde la libre circulación de las ideas hasta el legítimo derecho de error. (1996: 34)

The Cuban film critic Reynaldo González has also described this 'grey' period in less emotional but no less damning terms. The result of the Congress, he concludes, was to take Cuban Cultural policy far beyond the conciliatory and enlightened terms of *Las palabras* and certainly beyond the limits prescribed by Guevara in *El Socialismo y el hombre*:

> El asunto superaba la persecución a una minoría. Eran los tiempos en que desde posiciones de conducción cultural los funcionarios intentaron imponer los moldes del 'realismo socialista' del Este

> europeo, con menosprecio de la rica cultura autóctona. (1993: 10)[5]

Both González and Alberto list the authors who were driven into exile (either internal or external) by the intolerance. Those who remained in Cuba but were silenced included the great poet, essayist and novelist, José Lezama Lima and the playwrights Virgilio Piñiera and Antón Arrufat. Those driven abroad included Reinaldo Arenas, Severo Sarduy, José Triana and Lino Novás Calvo among others. Many are alluded to by Leonardo Padura Fuentes in his detective novels, as well as in other artistic works produced in the post-1991 period such as Tómas Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's highly acclaimed film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993), which will be discussed in detail in Section Three.

What happened to bring about this change in Cuban Cultural policy? Why did the revolution turn from having a seemingly inclusive attitude towards artistic expression to one which approximated the rigours of socialist realism? What happened between 1965 and 1971 to make the Cuban revolutionary government embrace a cultural policy against which Che Guevara had expressly advised?

The answer, in part, has to do with occurrences outside the cultural field which impacted heavily on the overall climate of Cuban society and, in part, with problems that arose within the cultural sphere that were resolved to the detriment of artistic freedom. An understanding of the years immediately before and during the 'grey period' is essential since the current generation of authors in Cuba were growing up at precisely this time. For example, Senel Paz (b. 1950) the author of *El bosque, el lobo y el hombre nuevo* upon which *Fresa y chocolate* is based, has commented how he was affected as a student at university by the unjust treatment of one of his teachers.[6] As already noted, Leonardo Padura Fuentes (b. 1955) is also working through his frustrations about this

period in his novels, frustrations which arose not only because of his own experience, but also on account of the way a paternalistic and restrictive establishment affected the development of the police novel itself. Padura's novels in general are at the same time a biographical account of his own formation during Cuba's 'grey times' and a reaction to the apologetic and didactic literature which this period produced. His book *Máscaras* (Tusquets, Barcelona 1997) which won the 1995 Café Gijón prize in Spain is a historical novel which specifically deals with the events following the 1971 Congress and the persecution of one of the characters is a major theme (see Chapter 9).

Eliseo Alberto has no doubt as to the root causes of the so-called *quinquenio*:

> El asesinato de Ernesto Che Guevara en una escuelita rural de Nancahuazú, la ofensiva revolucionaria de 1968, el fracaso de la zafra de los diez millones y, por supuesto, la guillotina que resultó ser el Primer Congreso de Educación y Cultura representan, digo yo, los cuatro infartos que anunciaron el colapso de la utopía rebelde. (1996: 34)

Alberto concurs with Carmelo Mesa-Lago (1974), Charles Bettleheim (1971), Jaques Valier (1972) and Edward González (1974) in considering that this collapse of the 'utopia rebelde' ushered in the 'Sovietisation' of Cuba. Such accounts of Cuban history see the Soviet influence in economic and political life impinging on Cuban cultural life. Thus, those members of the Cuban elite who were 'Guevarist' in their thinking were marginalised after his death and more vehemently Soviet oriented leaders came to the fore. Mesa-Lago, for example, makes much of the promotion of the old PSP (Cuban Communist Party) member Carlos Rafael Rodríguez to the position of Foreign Minister (1974: 10). In 1972, it was Rodríguez who negotiated Cuba's entry into COMECON.

The revolutionary offensive of 1968, as Alberto suggests, was a final push to rid Cuba of all vestiges of petite-bourgeois economic activity. Thus the establishments of all

small traders, shopkeepers, craftsmen and self-employed professions were closed down. This marked the final centralisation of the Cuban economy. While this in itself was a move not generally attributed to Soviet influence, nevertheless the eradication of the private sector facilitated the shift towards Soviet central planning which became a necessity after the failure of the ten million ton sugar harvest.

Although Fidel Castro had been warned that the target of reaching a harvest of ten million tons of sugar in 1970 was impossible, the leadership pressed on regardless, mobilising every possible worker to the task of cutting cane. Not only was the target not met, but severe economic problems ensued since vital areas of the economy had been neglected in the mobilisation effort (Aguila 1994:93-94). Thus it is generally accepted that 1970 marked a critical threshold in which the experimentalism that characterised the early years of the revolution gave way to a realism based upon the economic necessity to organise the economy on more structured institutional lines. Since the Soviet Union was Cuba's debtor, the ten million ton harvest having put Cuba more than ever in its debt, it was inevitable that the Soviet Union would place greater demands on Cuba to tow its line. As Mesa-Lago has documented, throughout the early 1970s Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Union both internationally and domestically (Mesa-Lago 1974: 9-28).

The First Congress of Education and Culture (1971) took place against this background of political uncertainty and economic failure, and, as explained previously, it was out of this Congress, that the cultural policies emerged giving rise to the 'grey five years' (Alberto 1996: 34). No discussion of this Congress should be made without reference to one of the most celebrated and controversial episodes of Cuban cultural history: the so-called 'Padilla Affair.' There is little doubt that this episode helped to shape the outcome of the Congress and, in particular, its vehement condemnation of the role played by what it called 'pseudo-leftist bourgeois intellectuals' in trying to

undermine the revolution. The hard-line which emerged from this Congress was undoubtedly intended to make sure that scandals such as the Padilla affair would not recur.

Most outsider versions of the 'affair' paint a picture of Padilla as a talented poet who was victimised for his poetry, which seemed to praise the virtues of individualism in an increasingly straight-jacketed society. Such accounts usually begin with the controversy surrounding Heberto Padilla's 1967 debunking of Lisandro Otero's novel *Pasión de Urbino* in favour of the then exiled Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres triste tigres* in the youth magazine *El caimán barbudo*. (I will refer to this episode again when discussing the work of Padura Fuentes in Chapter 8). The ensuing row over this article ended with the resignation of the magazine's editorial board and Padilla was prohibited from leaving the country for a tour of Italy. When in August 1968 Guillermo Cabrera Infante published an article in which he attacked the Cuban government for censoring Cuban writers, Padilla was immediately placed in a difficult situation because he seemed to have supported Cabrera Infante who had now publicly declared himself an 'enemy of the revolution.'

Padilla moved to distance himself from Infante by writing an article countering Infante's arguments, but in the same year he was awarded the 1968 UNEAC (Union of Writers and Artists) prize for his book *Fuera del juego,* a controversial choice made in part by an international jury which included the British critic James Cohen. The jury also chose a play by Antón Arrufat, *Los siete contra Tebas* for the drama prize. UNEAC officials were outraged by the choices because both books seemed to be openly criticising the revolution in a counter-revolutionary manner. The books were published but prefaced by strident political disclaimers written by the directorate of UNEAC. In November 1968, two articles were published in the armed forces' magazine *Verde Olivo*

signed with the pseudonym of Leopoldo de Avila (who is widely thought to have been either José Antonio Portuondo or the magazine's editor, Luis Tamayo Pavón) criticising Padilla and Arrufat.[7] Outsider accounts of the 'Affair', such as Lourdes Casal (1971) and José Yglesias (1971) suggest that the publication of such articles was an indication of a new offensive on the cultural front that led to Padilla's imprisonment a few years later. These events are referenced by Leonardo Padura Fuentes in his detective novels and I think it is necessary to discuss them fully here as they are referred to again in Chapter 9 in the context of his work. As Williams theorised (see Chapter 1) comparing the history with the fictionalised references of Padura Fuentes, I believe a deeper understanding of the Cuban revolutionary process is possible.

Insider accounts, written by Cubans who were directly involved such as Lisandro Otero and José Antonio Portuondo, emphasise that the 'offensive' had started before the Padilla controversy of 1968. Otero in particular accuses Padilla of being 'the author of his own tragedy' because he wished to be a kind of 'Yevtushenko of Cuba' to satisfy his vanity and in part to ensure that he achieved notoriety and fame outside Cuba.[8] In the Cuban version of events, Padilla knew full well the parameters within which he was expected to work and, because he was really a counter-revolutionary, he chose deliberately to provoke the authorities so that he would become the centre of a controversy over artistic freedom. Portuondo (1979) points out that parameters on artistic freedom began to tighten in the year before the controversy surrounding Padilla's book. He puts the start of the 'offensive', in 1967, after the Salón de Mayo exhibition in Havana in July that year. Portuondo calls this experience 'el último grito' of Cuban culture's subservience to its neo-colonial past and remarks that attitudes towards the influence of bourgeois foreign visitors began to harden after this event. It is significant that the Salón brought from Paris a large and varied number of visitors to Havana who

mixed freely with the Cuban intelligentsia, the consequences of which were not looked on favourably by everyone in the cultural establishment. Portuondo writes:

> De aquí algunas consecuencias negativas que fueron que algunos jóvenes escritores y artistas se sintieron seducidos por esas figuras y trataron de asumir una actitud, a veces hipercrítica frente a nuestras cosas, de enfrentarse a la Revolución, y cuando hubo que rectificar esa actitud, inmediatamente, aquellos escritores y artistas protestaron frente a nosotros. (1979: 45)

Portuondo might be referring here to authors such as Reinaldo Arenas whose problems with the cultural establishment began after the Salón exhibition. It was during the Salón that Reinaldo met Jorge Camacho, the painter, who took copies of Arenas's manuscripts back to Paris. Within weeks of Camacho's return to Paris Arenas's books were published in France. At this point Arenas's fate as a dissident was sealed since the novel *El mundo alucinante* can be read as an allegorical condemnation of the revolution. Arenas also transgressed the limits of behaviour as far as UNEAC was concerned by publishing abroad without its permission.[9]

Portuondo suggests that Padilla was also seduced by foreigners. Lisandro Otero (1987) recalls that Padilla had a habit of:

> [...] besieging foreign intellectuals who visited us, trying to get them to put out a foreign edition of his work, publish an article of his or just make a laudatory comment about him in a foreign publication. (1987: 89)

Padilla also apparently made derogatory comments about the revolution to K S Karol and René Dumont, both of whom were later accused by the Cuban government of being CIA spies. Whatever the truth about Padilla's motives there is no doubt that he was perceived to have been acting provocatively at a time when the cultural establishment was concerned about the artistic community and its relationship to colleagues outside the country (Avila in *Verde Olivo* Nov. 10 1968: 18).

In 1968 UNEAC held a Congress in Cienfuegos which declared the need for writers and artists to make their work serve the interests of building socialism. Its declaration stated that:

> [...] the writer must contribute to the revolution through his work and this involves conceiving of literature as a means of struggle, a weapon against weaknesses and problems which, directly or indirectly hinder this advance. (*Granma Weekly Review*, Oct. 27 1968: 8)

Such declarations were fuelled by what was perceived as a concerted effort in the foreign media to attack the Cuban authorities for what it claimed was a 'new Stalinism'. Otero (1987: 88) lists Fenton Wheeler of Associated Press, Michel Tourguy of France Presse and *Acción* magazine of Uruguay as forming part of an international effort to slander the revolution.

In 1969, José Lorenzo Fuentes, a winner of the 1967 annual UNEAC literary prize with his novel *Viento de enero*, was expelled from the Unión in a scandal involving an alleged CIA spy. The charge against him derived from his involvement with H. Carrillo Colón, an employee of the Mexican Embassy in Havana, supposedly instructed to infiltrate Cuba's intellectual circles.[10]

In response, the celebrated President of UNEAC, Nicolás Guillén, made a speech at the prize ceremony that year in which he noted that the revolution was facing an ever increasing hostility from the United States and that the Cuban population should understand that Cuba was to all intents and purposes at war:

> Hay que decirlo bien claro: es la guerra, pura y simplemente. Una guerra con bloqueo, con muertos, con invasores armados, con espias seudo cultos y seudo diplomáticos. (1969: 2)

He goes on to suggest that the time had come to act unequivocally:

> Ahora bien, a un estado de guerra debe corresponder una mentalidad de guerra. Nosotros, los escritores y artistas cubanos, no podemos vivir como si esa guerra no existiera [...] No seremos

> los escritores y artisas cubanos diferentes en responsibilidad de lo que es un soldado compañero nuestro. (1969: 2)

According to Otero, Padilla wished to take advantage of this situation to achieve notoriety. The controversy over his book, *Fuera del juego,* had made him famous as a dissident especially in Paris where it was published. For Otero, Padilla was an opportunist. For others involved, he was a naïve victim. Whatever the truth, what happened to him distorted and affected the Cuban cultural climate most profoundly. Most accounts of the affair tend to depict Padilla as an innocent victim, but it is my view that this cannot entirely be the case as the testimony of a crucial witness, Jorge Edwards, who otherwise is hostile to Fidel Castro, corroborates the story as told by Otero.

According to Otero, Padilla spent the years following 1968 wandering around hotels ingratiating himself with foreigners, including (after 1970), President Allende's newly appointed Chilean Chargé d'affaires to Cuba, Jorge Edwards. In his autobiographical account, Edwards (1973) corroborates Otero's version of events confirming that Padilla aroused the suspicion of the security forces. Edwards falls short of backing Otero' s claim that he himself was a secret agent, although he acknowledges that the Cuban security forces suspected him and did not want him to stay in Cuba.[11] The secret services actually bugged Edwards' and Padilla's rooms in the Havana Riviera hotel. Edwards claims that Padilla was given rooms next to his in order that the police might entrap them (1973: 101). Edwards also corroborates Otero's assertion that in the summer of 1970 Padilla became friendly with another guest at the Riviera, Pierre Gollendorf, a French photographer, who was also suspected of being a spy (1973: 108). After Gollendorf was arrested and tried in February 1971, a month later, the state security arrested Padilla and expelled Edwards. Padilla was held for a month and only released after he made a signed confession that he had acted against the revolution. But

during his arrest, outside Cuba, he was portrayed as an innocent victim of state sponsored repression of artists. Famously, a group of western European and Latin American intellectuals including Juan Goytisolo, Jean Paul Sartre, Julio Cortázar and Mario Vargas Llosa, signed a letter of protest calling for Padilla's release.[12] When he was released, having made his 'confession', these intellectuals (though not all those who had signed the first letter) wrote to Fidel Castro again, this time accusing him of the worst excesses of Stalinism since, in their words, Padilla's confession could only have been made under extreme pressure.[13] Edwards suspects that there was no maltreatment but merely an upbraiding from Castro personally (1973: 247) and Padilla in his own autobiography, falls short of accusing his captors of physical torture though he claims he lost consciousness when he was struck once by a police sergeant while in custody.[14] This intervention by western European intellectuals sent the wrong signal to Havana. If the protesters had wished to induce the Cuban authorities to relax their cultural policy, their actions had the opposite effect in that the affront merely confirmed the Cubans' perception that the Padilla scandal was a deliberately planned attack. The result was a tightening up, rather than a loosening of cultural policy.

The preliminary meetings of the proposed First Congress of Education were taking place in the provinces throughout this time. This congress involved more than 116,000 teachers and educationalists, who were meeting at a municipal level in March 1971 to discuss the future policy of education. Such was the outcry against the interference by foreign intellectuals, that the delegates at the meetings demanded that the role of culture be discussed as well. When the Congress finally met in April 1971, it was renamed to include culture in the title. In Portuondo's view, the change was not dictated by the leadership. He stresses that the final document of the Congress had arisen from discussions at the base:

> ...en el caso del Congreso la cosa tiene una intensidad mayor, porque el problema es que este Congreso había surgido primero como un evento estrictamente educacional y empezó a discutirse en la base y, desde los municipios fue subiendo a la región, a la provincia a la nación, y según se empezó a discutir, se empezaron a plantear allí problemas que desbordaron el estricto terreno educacional hacia el terreno cultural y comenzaron a surgir temas que tocaban ya a la estética y la política cultural, y así fue creciendo en potencia hasta el punto de que, cuando el Congreso llegó a la Habana, a su fase nacional, hubo que cambiarle el nombre, y ya no fue un Congreso de Educación solamente, sino de Educación y Cultura, porque el énfasis que ponía cada grupo, cada sección, era en los problemas culturales; todo el mundo estaba preocupado por estos problemas. (1979: 48)

The result of the Congress was a declaration which included measures that were a far cry from *Las palabras a los intelectuales*. The role of the artist was defined in the clearest way possible. As Portuondo remarks, the final declaration contained,

> [...] plantamientos fundamentales desde el punto de vista estético, en donde se hacen afirmaciones tajantes, para que nadie se equivoque. (1979: 49).

The declaration states baldly that what it calls tendencies based on 'un criterio de libertinaje con la finalidad de enmascarar el veneno contrarrevolucionario' (*Casa de las Américas* 1971 65-66: 4) would no longer be allowed. Works that conspired against the revolution would not be tolerated; when artists, cultural workers and intellectuals were appointed to posts, whatever they might be, their political and ideological 'condiciones' would have to be taken into account. The declaration called for a revision of the basis of all competitions and invitations to foreigners to take part on juries, 'que evite la presencia de personas cuya obra e ideología están en pugna con los intereses de la revolución'. (*Casa de las Américas* 1971, 65-66: 18)

> . Los medios culturales no pueden servir de marco a la proliferación de falsos intelectuales que pretenden convertir el esnobismo, la extravagancia, el homosexualismo y demás aberraciones sociales, en expresiones del arte revolucionario, alejados de las masas y del espíritu de nuestra revolución. (*Casa de las Américas* 1971, 65-66: 16)

Art becomes an instrument of state policy. The role of the artist henceforth was to eradicate any vestiges of the former Cuban capitalist society in his or her work. The writer had to take part in the general effort to inculcate revolutionary morals and Marxist-Leninism among youth and to defend the country from invasion by the enemy,

> El arte es un arma de la revolución [...] Un instrumento contra la penetración del enemigo. (1971: 18)

At the same time, no doubt on account of the intellectuals who had so recently supported Padilla, the Congress declaration condemned what it called 'falsos escritores latinoamericanos' who gain literary success then break ties with their cultures and their past:

> [...] y se refugiaron en las capitales de las podridas y decadentes sociedades de Europa Occidental y los Estados Unidos para convertirse en agentes de la cultura metropolitana imperialista. En París, Londres, Roma, Berlin Occidental, Nueva York estos fariseos encuentran el mejor campo para sus ambigüedades, vacilaciones y miserias generadas por el colonialismo cultural que han aceptado y profesan. (1971: 18)

In this way, writes Portuondo, the Congress cemented revolutionary aesthetics to politics. This political emphasis was repeated by Fidel Castro in his speech at the closing ceremony.

In his speech, Castro, made no mention of homosexuality, but he clearly endorsed the Congress declaration, particularly its attack on foreign intellectuals. 'Seudizquierdistas' would no longer be able to affect the course of events in Cuba

Cartoon from the armed forces magazine *Verde Olivo* 23 May 1971

as before. Cuba did not want or need them, and they would not be invited to sit on juries for literary prizes again. Castro made no secret for whom he thought they were working:

> Ya saben, señores intelectuales burgueses y libelistas burgueses y agentes de la CIA y de las inteligencias del imperialismo, es decir, de los servicios de Inteligencia de espionaje del imperialismo: ¡en Cuba no tendrán entrada!, como no se la damos a UPI y a AP ¡Cerrada la entrada indefinidamente por tiempo indefinido y por tiempo infinito! (1971: 28)[15]

Castro declared that art would from then on be submitted to a 'valoración política.':

> Nuestra valoración es política. No puede haber valor estético sin contenido humano [...] para un burgués cualquier cosa puede ser valor estético que lo entretenga, que lo divierta, que lo ayude a entretener sus ocios y sus aburrimientos de vago y parásito improductivo. Pero esa no puede ser la valoración para un trabajador, para un revolucionario, para un comunista...(*Casa de las Américas* 66, 1971: 28)

This is a clear directive that art must be made to serve political ends. As will become clear in the Chapters that follow, this turn of events had an immediate and profound effect upon Cuban culture. The Congress declaration was taken as a green light for some of the most disgraceful actions perpetrated by the Cuban state against its artists and writers. Although it is widely accepted that the situation gradually improved after 1976 with the creation of a new Ministry of Culture under Armando Hart Dávalos, it is significant that Castro's words at this Congress were still echoed by critics in 1997 during the above-mentioned controversy over the theatre. As Alberto and González testify, the effects of the Congress, in particular its attack on homosexuality, were far reaching and the consequences are still being felt.

Notes

[1] Cabrera Infante in *Mea Cuba* (1994: 343-346) calls *Las palabras* Castro's 'version of the Totalitarian credo.'

[2] See Carlos Franquí's account in *Retrato de familia con Fidel,* (1981: 261-73), in which he paints a picture of the conflict as the product of 'Viejos comunistas, apoyados de Fidel y Raúl, dirigidos por "Caníbal" [a pun on Aníbal] Escalante'(1981: 262) who wanted to destroy the avant-garde example of the *Lunes* supplement. He clearly blames Buchaca: 'La Buchaca, su Consejo de Cultura, era punta agresiva del sectarismo contra *Lunes*' (1981: 263). Cabrera Infante (1984:319) describes Alfredo Guevara as 'a Cuban Goebbels. Small, cunning and a seditous ape for those in power'

[3] Cabrera Infante writes: '[...] the similarities between Castro and Hitler are uncanny[...] both were dirty[...] both adopted military uniforms without having a military career[...] both were great actors who made PA systems and TV respectively the tools of their rise to power[..] Castro is a creature of such monstrous egoism that he makes other world leaders look like versions of Mother Teresa' *Mea Cuba* pp 319-322.

[4] See 'The consequences of mini-Stalinism' in K.S. Karol *Guerrillas in Power,* (1970: 231-49). At one point he concludes; 'I myself had the distinct impression that Cuba was rapidly being turned into a Stalinist quagmire' (1970: 243).

[5] It is this period that is widely understood to provide the setting for the film *Fresa y chocolate* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Juan Carlos Tabío and Senel Paz 1993) which, as González notes in this article, did much to ventilate the repressed emotions regarding this period and has been seen as a catalyst for a new period of openness in cultural and artistic expression. (See Chapter 9)

[6] See for example the interview with Paz by Peter Bush included in the English edition of the screenplay: *Strawberry and Chocolate.* (1995: 15-17)

[7] See Leopoldo Avila 'Las provocaciones de Padilla' *Verde Olivo* (Nov. 10, 1968: 17-18) and 'Sobre algunas corrientes de la crítica y la literatura y la literatura en Cuba' *Verde Olivo* (Nov. 24, 1968: 14-18). Lourdes Casal in *El caso Padilla* (1971) suggests that Avila is Portuondo but the photographer, Perfecto Romero, who worked at *Verde Olivo* at the time, told me in an interview that the author was Pavón.

[8] See Otero's account in *Dissenters and Supporters in Cuba* (1987: 100): ' He [Padilla] was an opportunist , an adventurer and a turncoat.'

[9] See for example Arena's autobiography: *Antes que anochezca* (1992: 141-143).

[10] For an account of this episode see Lourdes Casals: 'Literature and Society' in Carmelo Mesa-Lago ed. *Revolutionary Change in Cuba,* (1971: 460-461).

[11] See Jorge Edwards, *Persona Non Grata: An Envoy in Castro's Cuba.*(1973: 99). Edwards says he warned Padilla repeatedly about his activities and overt criticisms of the government but Padilla was confident that he would be left alone because he was well regarded by European intellectuals: 'He maintained that the regime took good care not to lose prestige with left-wing European intellectuals. He was convinced that their friendship and solidarity constituted an unassailable defence.'

[12] Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir may have been manipulated themselves. In a diary (1984:16) de Beauvoir explains that the letter was the idea of Juan Goytisolo. She relates that she and Sartre were telephoned by Goytisolo who evidently gave them the impression that Padilla was imprisoned on a 'charge of sodomy'. I have found no other reference to this charge in any of the accounts I have read, including Padilla's own. De Beauvoir notes that 'Goytisolo was of the opinion that Cuba was in the hands of veritable gang, all belonging to the police' . De Beauvoir also refers to Otero, whom she wrongly calls 'Lyssendro', as being a 'sinister figure' and as having 'the whole of Cuban culture under his thumb'. She also writes of the treatment she understood Padilla to have received: 'In *Le Monde* Arcocha, our former Cuban interpreter, who had chosen exile, said that Padilla and his wife must have been tortured.'

[13] A complete documentary record of the whole Padilla affair is contained in a special edition of *Index on Censorship*, London, Vol. 2, 1972 : 65-164. Cortázar was among the signatories of the first letter but not the second, unlike Carlos Fuentes. There were 55 signatories on the first letter and 58 on the second but only 25 signed both letters. These were Simone de Beauvoir, Italo Calvino, José Maria Castellet, Fernando Claudín, Marguerite Duras, Hans Enzensberger, Francisco Fernández Santos, Carlos Franquí, Carlos Fuentes, Juan García Hortelano, Jaime Gil de Biedman, Juan Goytisolo, Luis Goytisolo, Rodolfo Hintrosa, Monique Lange, Joyce Mansour, Juan Marsé, Dionys Mascolo, Plinio Mendoza, Alberto Moravia, Maurice Nadeau, Jean Paul Sartre, Jean Shuster, Susan Sontag and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Padilla wrote them a letter in reply in 1972 in which he criticised them for their inference that Cuba was Stalinist.

[14] Padilla's autobiography, *Self Portrait of the Other* (1989), contradicts Edwards's version of events in that according to Padilla, his apartment at the Riviera was paid for by Edwards and not, as Edwards asserts, given to him by the Cuban authorities (1989:131). It would appear from this book that Padilla might have been aggrieved by the treatment he received after the first controversy in 1968. 'I became a marginalised person' he says (1989:131) suggesting that his subsequent actions could have been prompted by his need for attention. After his capture, Padilla says he was beaten and lost consciousness (1989:149). When he agreed to make the confession, he claims he was told what to write. On his release he quotes his captor, a Lieutenant Alvárez, as saying: 'Look, we've come to the conclusion that you are a guy who eats a lot of shit but at the same time is driven by wildly grandiose ambitions. All your verbal fluency comes out of your being, essentially, a sloppy and lazy person. You declare war on us, but then you avoid the shoot-out' (1989:161).

[15] The idea that leading cultural figures might be agents of the CIA is not at all preposterous. Frances Stoner Saunders (1999) has shown conclusively how the CIA infiltrated itself into every niche in the western cultural sphere as part of the Cold War campaign against the Soviet Union. Her revelations place the debate around artistic freedom in a clear context. Through outlandish and extensive patronage via front organisations, the CIA funnelled funds into abstract art, for example, as a riposte to the dullness of socialist realism, the underlying reasoning being that 'artistic freedom' was to be vaunted as a cherished possession of the 'free' world. Cuba, by falling into the Soviet sphere was therefore also a target for this treatment.

Section Two

Evolution to Revolution 1915-1989

Chapter 4

Cuban detective narrative: 1915 to 1959

In order to insert the work of Cuba's detective writers in general and Leonardo Padura Fuentes in particular within a national tradition, I feel it necessary to examine the manifestation of the genre in Cuba prior to the revolution, a period which has been neglected by academics both inside and outside the island. Contrary to the established view, there was a relatively highly developed cultivation of the detective narrative in Cuba before revolution, and it is possible to argue that the post-revolutionary boom in the genre was an extension of a tradition stretching back to the early part of the twentieth century. In this chapter, I examine the reasons why academics have overlooked this period in the past and make a survey of the genre as it developed prior to the guerrillas coming to power.

In her overview of pre-revolutionary Cuban detective writing Amelia S. Simpson states that until 1971 'there was virtually no cultivation of detective fiction in Cuba':

> Although translations of works from Europe and the United States had been popular since at least the 1920s, the genre remained essentially an imported model, a narrative form that was widely consumed yet scarcely practised nationally. (1990:97)

In reaching such a conclusion, Simpson was perhaps influenced by post-revolutionary Cuban critics who play down the pre-revolutionary significance of the genre. She refers to Luis Rogelio Nogueras who, in a 1978 article, states that detective literature 'como muchos otros hechos de nuestra cultura' is a product of the revolution:

> No es un secreto para nadie que hasta 1959, en Cuba sólo unos pocos autores se ocuparon esporádicamente del género. En su inmensa mayoría, se trataba de relatos más o menos cortados según el patrón de la llamada "novela dura" norteamericana, y que aparecieron (firmados con seudónimos como John D. Thomas, por ejemplo) en alguna que otra tirada masiva. (1982: 41)

The critic Imeldo Álvarez states 11 years later in the introduction to his anthology of detective writing, *Narraciones policiales,* (1993):

> Antes de la Revolución, la presencia del género policial en Cuba fue disfrute de los receptores, y no cultivo del los creadores, aunque se produjeron algunas señales que hoy constituyen huellas arqueológicas. (1993:6)

Similarly, Armando Cristóbal Pérez, writing in 1981, dismisses the pre-revolutionary genre as insignificant and in the main overly inflected with a colonial subservience to the dominance of European and the US tastes. Commenting on the fact that the post-revolutionary boom in detective writing had aroused an interest in what had been produced before 1959, he writes that the genre 'no tuvo al parecer cultivadores.' There were occasional attempts by a few authors, but in the main these texts were imitations of the classics and manipulated by commercial interests which transplanted foreign situations and characters into Cuban settings. The absence of a peculiarly Cuban detective narrative was indisputable:

> En cualquier caso, la ausencia de obras literarias de autores reconocidos y de prestigio, dedicadas sistemáticamente al empeño conciente de creación alrededor del tema policíaco en Cuba, es un hecho indiscutible. (1981: 123)

Pérez suggests that this absence was due to economic, political and social conditions that impeded the development of the genre prior to 1959. He is correct in the sense that social and economic conditions in pre-revolutionary Cuba were not conducive to the cultivation of a mass literature. The low literacy rate, immense poverty and a smaller population, all limited the market for books and the demand for

literature.[1] The Revolution created the market for a popular genre such as detective fiction for the first time. However, in their dismissal of pre-revolutionary detective fiction, Nogueras, Cristóbal Pérez and Álvarez might also be guilty of overemphasising its insignificance in order to make the post-revolutionary genre appear even more impressive by comparison. For although the quantity of output does not compare with the post-1971 boom, it is not true to say that pre-revolutionary detective fiction was insignificant or that it was wholly characterised by being an imitation of the classics or by the importation of foreign features.

If only printed literature is taken into account, it is fair to say that the genre was not cultivated to a large extent but if, in addition, radio and film production is considered, the picture is different. A simple list of the output is impressive: before 1959 Cubans produced at least three full length novels, two magazines, dozens of short stories, one silent feature film, a silent film series, one short and two feature length 'talkies', and a popular radio detective series featuring one of the most celebrated radio detective heroes in the history of Latin American broadcasting, all of which will be discussed in this chapter. Rather than being a 'sporadic' output it is possible to perceive a varied yet continuous flow of narratives. Also, in terms of their 'national' characteristics, although the characters were by no means all Cuban or the narratives always set in Cuba, nonetheless far more could be described as Cuban than Simpson, Nogueras, Álvarez and Cristóbal Pérez suggest. Even where foreign influences were most dominant, readings of the genre can still inform an understanding of Cuban society as it developed through the first part of the twentieth century.

The first detective narrative created in Cuba was the film *La hija del policía o en poder de los ñáñigos.* Produced as early as 1917, it dealt explicitly with the issue of race and, more particularly, the activities of the secret Afro-Cuban cult of Abakuá.

This silent epic, some 72 minutes in length, was the work of Enrique Díaz Quesada who is credited with having written, directed and edited it with the financial help of the Cuban circus entrepreneurs Santos y Artigas whose circus was featured in the final scenes.[2] The Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) Cinemateca Archive in Havana, sadly does not have a copy of the film since it is believed to have been destroyed in a fire along with Díaz Quesada's ten episode detective serial *El genio del mal,* first shown in 1920, reportedly the first film serial made in Cuba. No records survive about the serial but a synopsis of *La hija del policía o en poder de los ñáñigos* in the journal *Cuba Cinematográfica* reveals that the main concern of the film-makers was to deliver a parable attacking the 'plaga social' of the Abakuá cult (1917:18).

A scene from *La hija del policía* the caption reads: 'El Policía Ramírez presta su juramento ante el cabildo de ñáñigos.' From *Cuba Cinematográfica* (1917)

The plot involves a detective, Pepe Ramírez, who succeeds in penetrating a group of the cult and arrests most of it members. Those who escape vow to avenge themselves and hatch a plot to kidnap his daughter. The ensuing adventure follows the detective's investigation and ultimate rescue of his child. Towards the end of the film, Ramírez is helped by two journalists, one of whom, Federico Gibert, according to the synopsis 'posee la sagacidad de Scherlock [sic] Holmes' (1917:18), a reference which indicates the extent to which Anglo-American detective heroes had penetrated the Cuban market by this time. However, the most salient aspect is the film's fascination with and condemnation of the Abakuá cult.

The film includes scenes of an Abakuá ceremony which, according to the synopsis:

> [...] resulta de gran originalidad para el público y se ha hecho con todos los detalles posibles. (1917: 10)

Evidently there is a paradoxical interest in the cult: on the one hand the film plays on a public fascination for its occult nature, while on the other it is professing a desire to eradicate the cult's influence. Instrumental in this is the character Luciano, a young black, the nephew of a witch who is associated with the cult and

> [...] que aunque quiere a su tía porque ella lo ha criado, es opuesto a las prácticas del fetichismo y muy a menudo reprende a su tía por eso. (1917: 11)

Luciano resolves to help Ramírez because he feels sorry for the girl when he sees her bound and gagged in his Aunt's house. Such feelings are the result of his having received the benefits of an education:

> Es Luciano la prueba palpable del beneficio de la escuela pública. Vedlo en esta película, como en medio de un mal ambiente, su instrucción lo pone a cubierto de un fanatismo ridículo. (1917: 11)

This faith in the 'civilising' powers of education is thus counterpoised by the way in which the film indulges some commonly held mythologies about the Abakuá.

Enrique Sosa in his study *Los Ñáñigos* (1982) traces the history of the cult back to free slaves who worked as labourers in the ports of Havana and Matanzas during the government of Miguel Tacón (1834-36). Tacón, while being a particularly despised Spanish Governor, paradoxically tolerated all kinds of African music and culture and allowed the Abakuá cult, among others, to flourish. The film, which is shot in Havana, Guanabacoa, Regla and Matanzas, is accurate in its locations because it is in these particular regions where the sect survives today. According to Sosa it is

> [...] la única sociedad secreta de su tipo en nuestro continente con tan valiosos aportes a nuestro acerbo cultural y folklórico. (1982:11)

Nevertheless the cult acquired the sinister reputation for being responsible for numerous evils including murder. Sosa reports that in the late nineteenth century, the cult was widely believed to be a refuge for criminal elements which resulted in a great deal of popular mythology about it. Hysteria was whipped up by the media of the day. Sosa remarks on how the cult was established among urban working class blacks who also used membership as a means to obtain work since the cult leaders were often foremen. Based in the poorest areas of the city, some groups also became the bases for gangs of thieves. In addition, the cult has two branches, the Efik and Ekoi who from time to time quarrelled and fought one another. This accounted for its sinister reputation which was then exacerbated by the press:

> Algunos barrios de La Habana se hicieron famosos por la particular fisonomía que les dio la presencia en su vecindario de numerosos ñáñigos, con la característica en muchos de sus integrantes de una actitud exhibicionista, jaquetona y regida por normas especiales que abrieron los *fambás* [temples] a delincuentes o predelincuentes. En tiempos de enfrentamiento entre sociedades de las ramas efik y ekoi, la mala fama de dichos barrios, por su peligrosidad social, con la del ñáñigismo, se incrementó, a lo cual contribuyó hiperbolizando hechos y denigrando sus ritos y sistema de creencias, la prensa más desvergonzada y sensacionalista del país. (1995: 35) [3]

Lydia Cabrera points out that the first such stories about the ñáñigos were put about 'a mediados del siglo pasado' by Don Antonio de las Barras y Prado who she quotes as writing in *Memorias sobre la Habana*:

> Los ñáñigos forman una asociación tenebrosa de robo y pillaje, para entrar en la cual, tiene el neófito que [...] beber sangre de gallo [...] y depués como última prueba de valor, le entregan un puñal para que salga a la calle a probar el hierro, lo cual hace dando una puñalada al transeunte que mejor le parece [...] (1970:21)

Such ideas, according to Cabrera, were denounced as 'pura invención' by the old devotees of the cult with whom she talked. Her informants wished to divulge their secrets to her as a corrective:

> Este error, calumnia la más humillante para el ñáñigo - lo es para toda la gente de color-, decidió a un anciano, a Saibeké, y otros iniciados, a romper su silenio y aclararnos su Misterio con verdadero interés, aunque se sabe en qué consiste el gran secreto de Abakuá. (1970: 11)

When, in 1904 a twenty-month old white baby was kidnapped and later found murdered, this racist myth took a macabre turn. As Aline Helg has documented, the so-called Zoila case became a public scandal in which the Abakuá were blamed for the murder (1995: 109-113). According to Helg, the hysteria resulted in the authorities appointing a white judge to investigate the killing. A series of white witnesses testified to the guilt of a *brujo*, African born former slave Lucumí Domingo Boucourt, and a Cuban born black, Juana Tabares. They were garrotted for the murder in 1906. The case had followed the murder of Celia, a young girl in Havana, apparently at the hand of a black assailant. The twin cases thus confirmed the racial stereotyping. Such was the pervasive power of these rumours that even before the Revolution in 1959, nannies were still warning their rich charges that if they were not good the *ñáñigos* would take them away (Sosa 1982: 12). Helg adds that this journalistic mythologising was given

academic support by the ethnologist Fernando Ortíz, whose early racial theories of crime are discussed below (1995: 112).

Thus when *La hija del policía* was made, there was already a climate of suspicion and fear of the Abakuá cult prevalent in white Cuban society, and the film itself was both a cause and effect of this. In this respect, in common with much detective fiction of the time, and the Sherlock Holmes stories in particular, the film shares a fascination with the racial, exotic and possibly supernatural as the source of evil. In such stories as Conan Doyle's *The Speckled Band, The Sign of Four* or Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* it is the Orient from which all manner of evil is perceived to stem.[4] Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1979) has positioned Doyle within a canon of Victorian writing that he sees as part of a larger, culturally bound way of conceiving the East as exotic, cruel, sensual, opulent and barbaric in such a way as to legitimise and naturalise Western civilisation and its domination over the east:

> Without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period. (1979: 3)

The net result of Conan Doyle's fiction is to demonise the Orient and to implicitly affirm 'English civilisation'. There is a sense that the urban safety of bourgeois London is threatened by the proximity of the 'colonies', in particular in the East End where the Chinese and the port area are located. It is with such arcane and closed societies (the Chinese, the Hindus) and dangerous geographic areas (the East End, the haunt of the Ripper) that Victorian detective fiction is obsessed. The detective, be he Poe's Dupin in the inner city of Paris or Conan Doyle's Holmes in fog-bound Victorian London, is a figure who can traverse these prohibited spaces and bring their secrets to light. The

Afro-Cuban cults and the dangerous black neighbourhoods of Havana would seem to hold a similar fascination in this film.

This comparison becomes all the more interesting as one explores later Cuban detective stories which also display a fascination with Afro-Cuban cults. The ñáñigos are also suspected of being responsible for the attempted murder of the society beauty, Rosa, in the 1926 novel, *Fantoches 1926.* As in *La hija del policía,* in this narrative they are also given a female accomplice, which would be extremely unlikely in reality as the Abakuá sect is strictly for men only. Lydia Cabrera describes how she had difficulty getting old devotees of the cult to talk to her and how they would not let women touch their drums or other instruments (1970:11, 152). Thus, linking a *bruja* or female witch to the cult, as in both these narratives, is creating a false and, for women at least, pejorative connection. Both were written by white, male, middle class Cubans. Interestingly, *Fantoches 1926* was jointly written by eleven members of the *Grupo Minorista,* a literary protest group founded by the poet, Rubén Martínez Villena, that congregated on Saturdays at the Hotel Lafayette.[5] In *Fantoches* the occult African explanation for the mystery transpires to be the product of a deranged and racially obsessed judge who all too readily believes the story of Mónica, a 'senil y decrépita' servant (1993:126). In the final chapter, written by the novelist, Carlos Loveira, a rational explanation of the shooting is provided, along with a denunciation of Judge Rodríguez de Arellano's version of events. Like Luciano in *La hija del policía,* contemporary Cuban blacks are described by Loveira as more interested in education than African cults. In summing up the Judge's mistaken version of events Loveira tells us:

> Su obsesión pronto convertida en monomanía, le impidió ver lo absurdo de que jóvenes hombres y mujeres de color, que llenan hoy, ansiosos de saber y educación, los salones de los institutos,

> de la Universidad y los clubs, pudieran seguir obedeciendo viejas y salvajes conjuras racistas o fetichistas. (1993: 127)

Fantoches was published in twelve instalments in the monthly magazine *Social* throughout 1926. Each month, a different member of the *Minorista* group wrote a chapter with Loveira writing the first and last. There were also illustrations for each chapter provided by twelve different illustrators. The final chapter illustrated by Conrado Massaguer, includes a drawing which succinctly encapsulates the intended political message as expressed in the title. 'Un fantoche' is, literally, a puppet or marionette and Massaguer's drawing clearly depicts members of Cuban society manipulated by a huge 'puppet master' who is possibly intended to be a depiction of the dictator, Machado.

Illustration overleaf: Massaguer's drawing for *Fantoches 1926,* taken from the 1993 edition of the novel (Havana: Editorial Capitán San Luis: 124)

Loveira's final chapter 'rescues' the plot from previous episodes written by the other members of the group who had introduced the racial stereotype by attributing the crime to an occult revenge murder attempt. This, according to Cristóbal Pérez, is evidence of an ideological split in the *Minoristas* which would become more pronounced later. The chapters in which the racial element was introduced were written by those members of the group who were to leave the *Minoristas* later and join reactionary movements. Cristóbal Pérez's reading of the novel differentiates between those authors who wished it to be a criticism of Cuban society and the dictator, Machado, and those who sympathised with the dictatorship:

> La corrupción nacional, llegada a un punto insostenible en ese segundo año del gobierno de Machado, tenía causas sociales y eran éstas las que había que analizar y combatir. Fue ésta la línea seguida consecuentemente por Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring y Rubén Martínez Villena.
>
> El resto de los autores, de una u otra manera, desvió el propósito, mediante la utilización del costumbrismo y el exotismo, en algunos casos con un marcado acento de prejuicio racial. (1981: 137)

The authors who were responsible for this 'prejuicio' were Alberto Lamar Schweyer who wrote Chapter 3, Alfonso Hernández Catá (Chapter 6), Jorge Mañach (Chapter 4) and Max Henríquez Ureña (Chapter 10). For example, Hernández Catá describes how the judge, Rodríguez Arellano is lured into the secret world of the ñáñigo cult:

> [...] fue presentado a una mulata achinada que "echaba bilongo" [performed magic] y preparaba saquitos de brujería; y por ésta a un chino viejo que fueron a buscar a un fumadero de la calle de La Salud. Del chino pasaron a manos de un negro casi mudo, que los llevó a casa de un cantador de sones con el que hicieron un viaje a Regla, último baluarte de los ñáñigos. Poco a poco siempre difrazado [...] iba penetrando en un mundo desconocido de pasiones oscuras, de ritos milenarios, al mismo tiempo grotesco y terrible, con ídolos deformes y puñales certeros. (1993: 64)

At each step, Arellano becomes more hypnotised by the terrible and mystical attraction:

> En cada nuevo eslabón era preciso un juramento. Y la casi terrorífica atracción de aquel mundo primitivo incrustado en la civilización de Occidente era tan fuerte, que el interés profesional ya apenas existía. Herencias de odios, lujurias impregnadas de muerte, contenida antropofagia de Africa y heladas crueldades de Asia, devanaban con precaución lentísima aquel hilo rojo al término del cual estaba Rosa Sánchez Acosta herida [...](1993: 64)

Catá later became Ambassador to Madrid; Schweyer, who was deputy editor of *Social*, went on to become Machado's press secretary, and Jorge Mañach was expelled from the group when he became a member of the proto-Mussolini style ABC Party. Cristóbal Pérez adds:

> Ya en 1927, concluida la publicación de *Fantoches,* la situación había cambiado internamente en el Grupo y cada uno de sus integrantes comenzaba a encaminar sus pasos hacia rumbos que, su conciencia de clase y los propios acontecimientos, harían antagónicos. (1981: 138)

Evidence of these antagonisms can be found in the different attitudes towards black Cubans in *Fantoches.*

Why should this race question feature so prominently in both this book and *La hija del policía* ? The fact offers a point of departure for a discussion of some of the race issues which were of concern at the time. Accurate knowledge of African religions was not widespread and the actual extent of African influences on Cuban culture was not properly appreciated or legitimated until Fernando Ortíz began to publish the findings of his anthropological studies in 1906. Curiously, Ortíz, who is credited with having coined the terms, transculturation, Afro-American and Afro-Cuban, was also a member of the *Minoristas* and he appears in the novel as the character Hernando Ortez. Chapter eight of *Fantoches,* written by Rubén Martinez Villena, the founder of the group and

Ortiz's secretary, includess a scene in which Ortez (Ortíz) speaks at length on the extent to which Cuban society had become influenced by African culture.

> Hoy vive entre nosotros, en la ciudad civilizada, la raza esclava de ayer: sus religiones bárbaras, y fetichismo ingenuo, sus ritos antropofágicos, sus agrupaciones sectarias, han sido compartidos por el blanco y moral y mentalmente viven dentro del mismo blanco civilizado de hoy, bien por contagio, bien por imperio hereditario de una ascendencia que se ignora o se niega.(1993: 84)

It should be recalled that these narratives were created within the first quarter century of Cuban independence, a time particularly marked by political instability. The United States exerted a dominant influence over Cuban affairs, including three occupations by US Marines to put down rebellions, the last, in 1912, to help defeat a revolution organised by the *Partido Independiente de Color* (Independent Party of Colour). Founded in 1906, by the black Liberal leader Evaristo Estenoz, this party claimed that blacks had been 'robbed ... of all the fruits of victory'.[6] According to Estenoz, blacks had made up 85 per cent of the liberating army of the War of Independence but had been 'rewarded' with the implementation of segregationist and prejudicial policies, some imported from their Northern neighbour, that resulted in a widespread discrimination.[7] This perception was exacerbated by the government policy of encouraging immigration from the Spain which resulted in an influx of white settlers competing for jobs, who had no knowledge of black people or their African ways. It would be logical to assume that it was among these recently arrived white settlers that ignorance and fear of the secret African societies was most pronounced. There might therefore be a logical connection between this influx of Spaniards and the growth of the racial stereotyping explained above in relation to the film, *La hija del policía.* As we have seen in relation to *Fantoches 1926*, this stereotypical attitude towards blacks was also shared by members of the intelligencia and it is interesting to note that two of the

Minoristas who introduced the race element into *Fantoches*, spent many of their formative years in either Spain or North America. Jorge Mañach spent most of his childhood in Spain and thereafter was educated in Massachusetts High School and Harvard. Hernández Catá received his secondary education in Madrid. Ortiz himself was educated in Spain and began his career as a criminologist writing about black society. As Helg (1993) argues, there is no doubt that Ortiz's early pseudo-scientific theories legitimised the popular stereotype of the black as being a threat to society. His early books such as *La ampa afro-cubana: Los negros brujos* (1906) and *La hampa afro-cubana: Los negros esclavos* (1917) concentrate on an explanation of criminality based upon the notion that it was an inherent characteristic of blacks.

Los negros brujos written in 1905-6, has as its prologue, a letter praising the work from the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909) who formulated the theory that criminals were a distinct anthropological type who could be identified scientifically by careful measurements of the shape of their skulls. The young Ortiz clearly agrees with his Italian mentor:

> El brujo afro-cubano, desde el punta de vista criminológico, es lo que Lombroso llamaría un delinquente nato, y este carácter de congénito puede aplicarse a todos sus atrasos morales.(1917: 367)

Ortiz later radically modified his views to argue that criminality stemmed from a cultural rather than racial origins but at the time when both *Fantoches* and *La hija del policía* were produced, he was contributing to a belief in the inherent criminality of blacks.

What is particularly interesting is how far these theories, and the wider public attitude towards blacks is represented in the novel *Fantoches 1926. Los negros brujos* is not primarily concerned with the ñáñigos but it is a wide ranging study that reports on the rituals, vocabulary and the kind of spells that blacks of various different cults

allegedly performed and which, Ortiz concluded, lead them into crime by exacerbating conflicts between them, by accidents such as poisonings, or by stealing from graves to obtain ingredients for spells such as human bones and body parts. By placing curses on one another, Ortiz argues, blacks often kill to get curses lifted just as the attempted murder in *Fantoches* is perceived by the Judge to be the consequence of a witch's curse (Ortiz 1916: 357). The book also contains a series of reports culled from newspapers; there is no mention of the Zoila case but there are numerous references to similar occurrences, one of which, from the Santiago de Cuba newspaper, *Cubano Libre* (March 1905), provides a real-life basis for the plot of *La hija del policía*:

> Va tomando cada día caracteres más alarmantes el rumor que circula en esta ciudad sobre la aparición de varios ñáñigos en el seno de la población.
> Según tenemos entendido, en la noche del martes o miércoles de esta semana (20 marzo 1905), y favorecido por la obscuridad, intentó uno de esos ñáñigos secuestrar a una niña, hija de un conocido señor, y hasta se asegura, sin que de ello (tengamos) [sic] hayamos adquirido, como intento referido, la noticia cierta, que por la calle de San Antonio ha desaparecido un niño. (1916: 339-340)

It is evident that by the latter part of the first quarter of this century, the issue of race was a significant topic of public concern in Cuba. It was brought to the fore by events such as the Black uprising of 1912 which was itself a symptom of an increasing discrimination against blacks, and by the publishing of work on black customs, beliefs and criminality by Fernando Ortiz. It is unsurprising that this controversy should find its way into popular culture and in a way which counterpoised the supposedly 'savage' nature of the African culture with the 'civilising' influence of white European society. Detective fiction is rooted in popular culture and perceived threats. Before 1959, in a capitalist, neocolonial culture and society, the preoccupations of race and

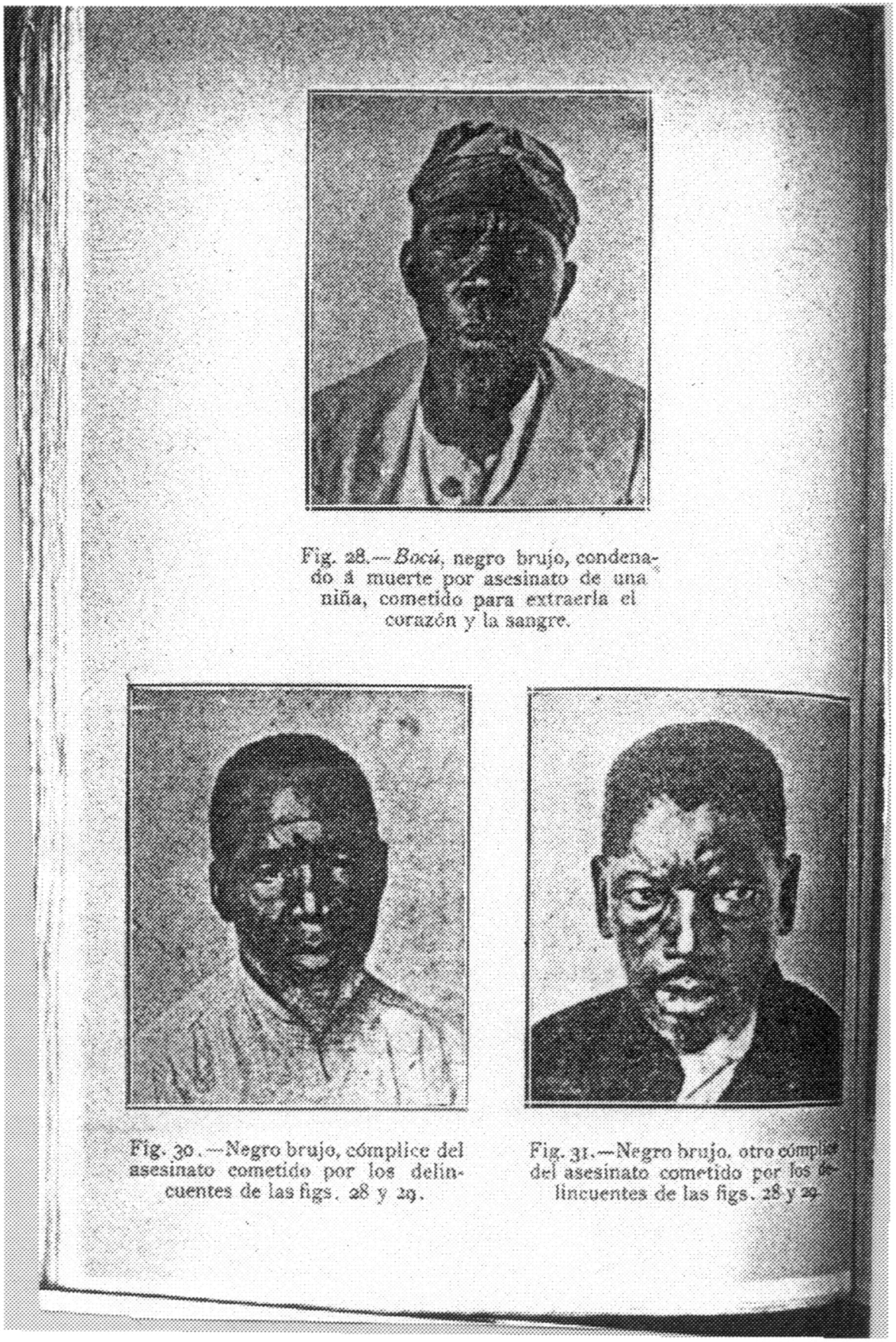


Fig. 28.—*Bocú*, negro brujo, condenado á muerte por asesinato de una niña, cometido para extraerla el corazón y la sangre.

Fig. 30.—Negro brujo, cómplice del asesinato cometido por los delincuentes de las figs. 28 y 29.

Fig. 31.—Negro brujo, otro cómplice del asesinato cometido por los delincuentes de las figs. 28 y 29.

Illustration from *Los negros brujos.* Note the offence of Bocú (fig 29)

violent crime surface in the narratives. They surface perhaps because they are sensationalist and attract readers in what was a commercial market.

Evidence of the power of the market and a more subtle form of Orientalism is discernible in the next important Cuban detective creation, *Chan Li Po,* a Chinese detective character who made radio history in the 1930s. *Chan Li Po* was indisputably an imitation of a foreign character. Its creator, a journalist and theatre director turned radio entrepreneur from Santiago de Cuba, Felix B. Caignet, admitted that he had imitated the *Charlie Chan* serials in the cinema.[8] Earl Derr Bigger's polite oriental sleuth with the large family and even larger repertoire of Chinese proverbs, was first serialised in the cinema in 1926.[9] Caignet's genius was to transfer the character to the radio, beginning in Santiago in 1934. He had already begun narrating children's stories in weekly episodes in 1931 with some success but *Chan Li Po* was to revolutionize radio broadcasting in the island. According to Oscar Luis López, the actor who played the character of the detective and who has since written the only history of radio broadcasting in Cuba, Caignet invented the character at the suggestion of the head of a tobacco company, Eden Cigarettes, who in turn sponsored its production on the US owned station, CMKD (1981:506). The success of *Chan Li Po* prompted all the radio stations to imitate it.

> A partir de 1934, con la salida al aire de ese espectáculo en todo Oriente, en todas emisoras grandes o pequeñas alguien se sentó y empezó a hacer episodios en forma humorística, con detectives humorísticos también y haciendo una parodia de lo que era Chan Li Po. (Interview with Oscar Luis López in Havana 1995 - see appendix 2)

In 1937, Caignet brought his show to Havana but failed to convince radio bosses of its attraction. They were locked in a 'drama war' broadcasting three act plays and

were afraid to try something new. Eventually he managed to convince one of them to give *Chan Li Po* a test run:

> [...] él le dijo que a él le interesaba pero él querría hacer una prueba. Es decir, en una hora que él tenía que radiar teatros, una noche cualquiera no radiar el teatro y explicar que iban a someter a la audiencia un nuevo espectáculo e iban a poner un capítulo que llamaran, que escribieran para ver si gustaba o no. Y entonces él cogió un capítulo de *La serpiente roja* y lo puso esa noche. Demás está decir que se cayó el teléfono llamando todo el mundo, llamando: ¡Que se repetieran! ¡Que lo pusieran! (1995 - see appendix 2)

In Havana, *Chan Li Po* was sponsored to advertise a chocolate bar, Armada, and within six months was sold to Argentina. It later became the advertising vehicle for Sabatés SA and was broadcast on the COCO radio station until 1941 when Caignet dropped it in favour of romantic soap operas. Thus, whereas *Fantoches 1926* was a subtle way of criticising the status quo, in the case of *Chan Li Po,* coming only a year after the convulsion of the revolution of 1933 and the overthrow of the Machado dictatorship, the detective narrative becomes associated with a purely commercial interest. It also coincides with the advent of widespread radio set ownership and the rapid growth of the medium as a means of entertainment, especially in a society in which relatively few people could read.[10]

According to López, *Chan Li Po* was 'el espectáculo más oído de todos los tiempos' becoming so popular that cinemas would advertise a pause in the evening screenings to tune in to that night's episode so people would not miss it:

> [...] el éxito es tal en 37 que a las ocho de la noche se para la ciudad de La Habana. Si usted caminaba por la calle se oía el episodio del chino hablando desde el momento que salió al aire. (1995 - see appendix 2)

The popularity of the series merits some discussion especially as competition between radio stations was intense. Investment in the industry, particularly by US companies

was high and according to López, Cuba could boast of being fourth in the world league of countries having the highest number of radio stations with 62 (1981:91). The question arises as to why should people choose to listen to *Chan Li Po*? There seems little doubt that one factor in its popularity lay in the humorous portrayal of the character, whose exaggerated Chinese accent is so stereotypical that it might be considered a caricature. (Oscar Luis López is not Chinese and most definitely seems to turn Chan Li Po into a caricature). The plots are also parodies reminiscent of *grand guignol* sensationalist melodramas which depend heavily on terror rather than mystery for their appeal, each episode written with a carefully constructed 'cliff-hanger' ending. López writes:

> Escribiendo este programa, Caignet adquiere un dominio absoluto del suspenso y falso suspenso, que dejaba al radiooyente con la ansiedad e interés de escucharlo al día siguiente. (1981: 506)

According to López, Caignet hit upon a formula which became the model for such radio series throughout Latin America:

> [...] marcó una serie de innovaciones que repercutiría en Cuba y en toda la América Latina hasta nuestros días:
> a. El espectáculo de continuidad serialada.
> b. El género detectivesca.
> c. El suspenso.
> d. El falso suspenso.[11]
> e. El narrador
> f. La no desaparición definitiva de un personaje negativa si este le agradaba al oyente
> (1981: 507)

López's claims that Caignet was the first to employ this formula are over-enthusiastic, but Caignet was able to see the commercial possibilities of a radio thriller serial and imported already well established methods to the medium. Magazine suspense serials had been popular throughout the world from the mid nineteenth-century and it was of course a medium in which detective literature also flourished. Transferring the

format from the page to the loud-speaker is hardly a radical innovation. Of all the characteristics identified above, the last (f) is perhaps the most original and indicates how sensitive Caignet was to the whims of his audience. If any character proved popular, whether they were evil or not, they would be retained.

Another aspect of the formula, not mentioned by López is the fact that Chan Li Po was not a Cuban detective, and none of the plots are set in Cuba. They were all located outside the island in cities such as Los Angeles, London Paris or New York. Thus, *Chan Li Po* does in part merit Cristóbal Pérez's criticism of pre-revolutionary Cuban detective fiction being an imitation of foreign 'classics'. Nevertheless, it also represents a national achievement because the series became a cultural export to countries such as Venezuela, Mexico and Argentina and earned Caignet sufficient capital for him to launch a film project. *Chan Li Po* not only provided the cash, it also provided the subject matter for the first sound feature film made in Cuba when, in 1937, Caignet produced *La serpiente roja* (incidentally, the first radio series) as a talking picture.

Filmed in black and white during May 1937 in the Hotel Almendares, Havana, for a total cost of $50,000 and using an all Cuban crew and cast, the film proved a success with the public, recovering its costs within three months.[12] The fact that the plot was based in London and not Havana was not missed by its reviewers who, while welcoming the film as the first such production of its kind in Cuba, also expressed disappointment that it was not set in Cuba. Writing in the newspaper *El Avance*, Mario Lescano Abella comments:

> Esta, ya lo dijimos, es la primera película sonora hecha en Cuba. Denuncia grandes posibilidades para hacer otras con fines menos comerciales y aportes de mayor calidad temática. Películas que sean cubanas no por la procedencia, por los laboratorios, sino por su asunto, ambiente, matices y personajes. Estas características, en definitiva, son las que dan carta de nacionalidad a la obra de arte y las que

> indefectiblemente nacionalizan el cine o el teatro. (20 July 1937: 3)

An editorial in the *Diario de la Marina* begins:

> Cuando nos enteramos de que se estaba "rodando" una película en La Habana, con productores, técnicos y artistas cubanos, supusimos que la acción se desarrollaría en Cuba, lo que significaba una oportunidad excelente para probar las posibilidades fílmicas de nuestro paisaje, de nuestros tipos, de nuestra música, de nuestras costumbres de todo eso que nosotros amamos por nuestro y que al extranjero le interesa por exótico. (July 20, 1937: 3)

The authors go on to state that the success of Spanish and Mexican cinema lay not in their technical excellence but in their 'denso contenido de esencias vernaculares', adding that: 'El cine criollo se ha iniciado por otros caminos' (July 20: 3).

R. Becali [sic], writing in *El País* (Havana) remarks that the film was made thanks to the popularity of the radio series and with the intention of making money. He implies the plots are absurd:

> De ahí se atendiera antes que a nada, el resultado positivo del reembolso del dinero gastado, y Chan Li Po y sus embrollos, más o menos absurdos, eran, pudiéramos decir, "un cheque al portador".
>
> Al decir esto, no condenamos a los responsables del hecho por tratarse de una primera producción en la que debemos ver como algo primordial, el afán de hacer resurgir la cinematografía cubana, aunque para ello no se escoja algo que sea precisamente cubano. (July 20, 1937:5)

These remarks indicate a broadly felt need for a national cinema at a time when Cuban economic, social and political life had become completely dominated by the United States. According to the Cuban historian, Oscar Pinos Santos (1961), for example, between 1914 and 1931 North American investment in Cuba quintupled. US companies dominated three-quarters of all sugar production, almost the whole of mining and public services and had taken over, as the sole creditors, the national bank. This was achieved at the expense of British and domestic capital which was brought to ruin

(1961: 74). The revolution of 1933 and the rise to power of Fulgencio Batista as head of the army, heralded an unprecedented era of US domination of political life exerted via his influence. Ironically, it also provided a stability which had been lacking hitherto and which gave rise to the possibility at least of a some kind of cultural establishment to be nurtured.

Caignet's series, in as much as it imitated foreign forms and served as a promotional vehicle for products in Cuba's highly developed commercial radio media, can be seen as a product of its day: undeniably escapist, crassly popular, appealing to a humorous racist stereotype, and especially sensationalist:

> "La serpiente roja", más que una película policíaca, es una "película de miedo". Se ha apurado lo truculento hasta las heces. Así como hay casos de "aparecidos", ésta donde desarrolla la acción de "La serpiente roja" es una especie de demonio doméstico que goza en escamotear a muertos y vivos, en darles porrazos a la gente y mantener una terrible amenaza de estrago y de muerte sobre la protagonista, una dulce muchacha que no sabe qué pecados ha cometido para que la persiga de tal modo el trasgo familiar. (*Periódico de la Marina* July 20, 1937: 2)

Such plots are typical. The radio series, *No lo maté* (1937), which was recreated and broadcast in Cuba by the Havana radio station, Radio Arte, in 1987 as a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the show, involves the elaborate framing of a young man for the murder of his sister by a 'mad scientist' who carried out the murder as part of an experiment aimed at obtaining the secret of everlasting life.

Sadly, the hopes of the film critics that *La serpiente roja* would lead to a renaissance of a Cuban cinema were not fulfilled. Caignet left Cuba to take up a highly lucrative contract in Mexico in 1941 and never returned. He died in Mexico in 1976.

The success of *Chan Li Po* demonstrates the extent to which Cuban popular taste for detective and mystery stories had developed. This was further reflected in print by

the publishing of magazines devoted to the genre. During the 1920s, just as the novel *Fantoches 1926* was being serialised in the magazine *Social* there was also a contemporaneously published magazine called *Fantomas*. The name raises the possibility that the title *Fantoches* was also a pun on this magazine. It is not possible to discuss the contents of *Fantomas* because the Biblioteca Nacional in Havana does not retain any copies. There is, however, a reference to the magazine in an article by the journalist Héctor Poveda in his review *Revista de avance* published in 1927 (1927. 2. 13: 20-23) . Poveda, the nephew of the poet José Manuel Poveda, writes that when *Fantomas* appeared it was an 'acontecimiento sensacional' which resulted in the stories' adaptation to the theatre and later 'unos cuantos' being made into films. There were 18 volumes of the magazine published before it went out of circulation, an event which Poveda mourns because he had evidently become addicted:

> Yo leí la obra con creciente interés. Y algo peor aún: cuando exprimí la última página del último tomo, me quedé esperando, muy nostálgico y enviciado, la segunda serie de hazañas fantomiásticas que nos anunciaban los autores. (1927: 22)

Poveda states that in his opinion the stories in *Fantomas* were of such quality that they must have been the work of 'maestros del arte narrativo' who had been obliged to hide their true identities beneath pseudonyms to protect their reputations. While the Cuban masses shared the passion for this literature, the literary classes also viewed it with disdain:

> El concepto general de 'cosa ínfima', que abate al género policíaco, es como un baldón que pesa demasiado sobre el orgullo de los artistas; resulta forzoso y prudente ocultarse bajo el incógnito. (1927:22)

Why *Fantomas* ceased publication is not known nor is the fate of another weekly magazine published for a short while during 1931 in Havana. *Detective mundial* was

devoted to both detective story writing and to true life crime. According to its editors, Gabriel Casanovas de la Cruz, Emilio Gisbert and Antonio D'Torra, the magazine published 25,000 copies per week. In an editorial Casanovas de la Cruz writes to thank readers for their support and explains the reasoning behind the publication:

> Háblase, en sus páginas, de ese género de literatura que relata a la curiosidad pública, el desenvolvimiento de hechos criminosos que ejercen sobre las muchedumbres atractivos irresistibles porque no es aventurado decir que es innato en el hombre el gusto por las leyendas sanguinarias, y que ante cualquier tenebroso proceso criminal aguza la curiosidad asombrado. (April 25, 1931, 4:2)

The attraction of the crime story was such that it crossed all class barriers:

> El espectáculo del crimen seduce [...] en cuanto al crimen plebeyo, el de ebrio de alcohol y acentos de infamia; que el otro, el burgués, no tan frecuente y que habla y se viste de levita como nosotros, tiene el poder de impresionar con más viveza, las imaginaciones populares. De los dos tiene nuestra publicación. (1931, 4:2)

But the magazine was not only concerned with fictitious crime. It also carried stories of real-life crime from all over the world and profiles of real detectives who, in the view of the editor, modelled themselves on a fictional character:

> Procuramos llevar hasta el lector, algo que le interese, en este género de información periodística, tan en boga hoy en las populosas ciudades del orbe, por haberles puesto sobre el plano de las actualidades, las portentosas hazañas, de esas verdaderas legiones de Detectives, cuyo arquetipo es y seguirá siendo por mucho tiempo, según creo: el mago policía que bajo el nombre de Sherlok [sic] Holmes inmortalizó un famoso novelista de mundial y reconocida fama. (1931, 4:3)

Sherlock Homes was neither a policeman nor, as Casanova de la Cruz implies, based upon any real personality. De la Cruz is clearly a victim of the 'Holmes myth' (See the Introduction).

Front cover of issue 4 of *Detective Mundial*, published in Havana, 25 April 1931

A glance at the contents of a typical issue of *Detective mundial* reveals the editor's propensity to merge fact and fiction. For example, the first issue (April 4, 1931) contains seven articles, of which four appear to be based on facts and the other three are short stories. The true-life articles are: 'El crimen de Boca Griego' by Antonio D'Torra, about a real murder in Playa de Guanabo near Havana; a lurid explanation of how the electric chair works; an historical story of a real murder in Spain, and profiles of the local police chiefs in Matanzas and Santo Domingo. The short stories are all foreign: *Tumba de secretos*, by Jean Rogers is set in London; *Su obsesión*, also by Jean Rogers, is set in Paris, and *El Robo de 100 mil pesos,* by Andrew Benson, is about a US train hold-up. Unfortunately, the magazine only ran to six issues and the reason for its demise is unknown. Whether the contributors' names are real or pseudonyms is also not known.

Another magazine dedicated to crime fiction was *Sombras y fantomas* published during the late 1930s, according to Imeldo Álvarez (1993: 6), but sadly, as with its similarly named predecessor, no copies of these magazine have been kept by the Cuban Biblioteca Nacional. Other magazines including the famous society magazine *Bohemia,* published continuously since 1910, also carried crime stories perhaps in far greater quantities than the Cuban critics have recognised.

One of the most important detective fiction writers published by *Bohemia* from a literary and social point of view was Lino Novás Calvo (1905-83). He is credited with having published at least eight detective stories in the magazine between 1948 and 1952 under his own name and possibly more under pseudonyms. The exact number is unknown. José M Fernández Pequeño, as late as 1995 in *La Gaceta de Cuba* points out that the series of short stories Novás Calvo published in *Bohemia* were 'hasta hoy prácticamente desconocida' (1995, 6:59). The reasons for this were partly due to the

fact that Novás Calvo left Cuba in 1960. As a result, knowledge about Novás Calvo was lost.[13] Another reason is that in later life Novás Calvo himself seemed to place little importance on his short stories. Pequeño quotes him as saying in 1971:

> Los cuentos policiales fueron un entretenido ejercicio. Nada más. Además, no conservo nada de lo publicado en revistas y periódicos antes de 1960. (1995, 6: 59)

However, Novás Calvo's interest in the detective novel was far more profound than he suggests here. His interest in crime can be traced back to the introduction to *Un experimento en el barrio chino* (1936). In a letter he wrote to the editor, reproduced as an introduction to the novel, Novás Calvo states that he began to write about gangsters and pirates for the Spanish magazine *Mundo gráfico* but since it was now defunct, he had turned to writing stories which he hoped would be:

> [..] a la vez que un documento más profundo que la Prensa, un reflejo emocional, más verdadero que el cinematógrafo, de las inquietudes, extravíos, grandezas y miserias de nuestro tiempo. (1936: 2)

Imeldo Álvarez records that Lisandro Otero credits *Un experimento en el barrio chino* as being the first Cuban police novel, but this book, published in Madrid by 'La novela de una hora' is only 53 pages long and it should not be included in the detective fiction genre. Following the adventures of a high living baroness and her sadistic, drug induced adventures in Barcelona's (note not Havana's) Chinatown, it is a picaresque adventure story, not a mystery. Novás Calvo did not start to write crime mysteries until the following decade when he seems to have been converted to the genre for artistic reasons. In 1945, he took the Mexican author and critic Alfonso Reyes to task for his essay 'Sobre la novela policial' published in the Mexican journal *Todo*. In this essay, Reyes extols the virtues of the classic 'problem' or puzzle novel of the type written by Poe, Conan Doyle and Dorothy L Sayers. Novás Calvo disagreed. In his article 'Un

error de Alfonso Reyes', published only a few weeks later in the Cuban magazine *Información,* he upbraids the Mexican for having overlooked the new North American writers who had revitalised the genre and with it, in his opinion, the art of novel writing itself:

> El error de Reyes, es una preferencia que puede ser dañiña en nuestra literatura cuando la novela (perdida en el caos experimental y los contrabandos políticos, científicos, sociológicos y filosóficos de los últimos años) quizás vuelva a encontrar su camino guiada, en parte, por lo que la narración policíaca ha conservado de novela.(1945a: 36)

Novás Calvo believed that the novel was in need of being revitalised and he saw this in the work of Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain and Raymond Chandler:

> Yo creo que la novela ha llegado a una etapa en que tiene que volver a ser ... novela. Nada menos, pero nada más , que novela. Y es ahí donde enlaza con el género policíaco, que fue (en los pasados años de soberbia, confusión, intelectualismo y sofisticación) el que conservó su legítima e indisputable posición de narración pura de una historia ficticia. (1945a: 36)

That a Cuban should be attracted to the North American police novel is not merely a matter of taste cultivated by the close proximity and the overwhelming US commercial and cultural influence in the island at this time. It is perhaps also because by the 1930s Cuban society was so Americanised that the kind of world which Hammett describes fitted the Cuban reality. In Hammett's *Red Harvest* (1929), for example, a town becomes controlled by the Mafia who are hired to break a strike. The history of twentieth-century Cuba until 1959 is littered with such eventualities. Hammett's and Chandler's preoccupation with corporate and police corruption were also very real concerns in Havana. For Pequeño it was inevitable that Novás Calvo should relate to this type of fiction:

> El cubano no podía dejar de sentirse atraído por el modo en que Dashiell Hammett o un Raymond Chandler recreaban en

> su literatura los bajos fondos, donde hombres solitarios y colocados en situaciones extremas se movían según una moral que no admitía oposiciones maniqueas y se expresaban en un vivísimo argot popular. Eran componentes que, salvando las distancias de lugar y género, él había barrajado insistemente a lo largo de su carrera literaria (1995: 60)

Earlier, in an article in *Hoy* newspaper, Novás Calvo had expanded on his idea that Hammett had developed a new mode of artistic expression:

> Noté que no sólo había perfeccionado un estilo, sino que había incorporado a este tipo de novela elementos que la situaban más allá de ella, entre las grandes obras del arte literario. No había creado, precisamente, un nuevo tipo de novela policíaca sino un nuevo modo de *decirla,* equilibrando lo simple con lo trascendente. (1945b: 36)

Novás Calvo therefore embarked upon writing detective stories after an appreciable period of studying the work of the North American novelists, but in stark contrast to the idea that his work was 'imitadora', Pequeño insists that it was original:

> Así las piezas que tres años después comienza a publicar no son "intentos de cuentos policiales", sino textos sustentados en un único programa coherente de acción que en este sentido conoció la literatura cubana antes de 1973[...] Efectividad técnica, diseño convincente de los caracteres, fidelidad a la circunstancia cubana y agudeza en la concepción del sujeto pueden encontrarse en estos cuentos. (1995: 60)

Novás Calvo wrote detective stories, and set them in Cuban society. He employs two important plot structures: the protagonist, sometimes a policeman, is obliged to discover the real culprit or find evidence to clear his own name or that of a friend or lover. In others, the story is centred on the commitment of a crime.

In the first group, in stories such as *Un sábado por la tarde, Un paseo por Quinta Avenida,* and *El santo de cerillo,* the protagonist finds himself completely alone in a predicament from which only he can extricate himself because the society around him is completely indifferent. In the crime stories such as *¡Y baila y baila y baila!, La yegua*

ruina y el tiro chicuito and *El asesinato televisado* the weak avenge themselves on the powerful, but in ways that do not entirely satisfy them.

Illustration from 'Un sábado por la tarde' *Bohemia,* 51, December 1949

El asesinato televisado is written with irony and touches upon various aspects of the corruption within Cuba's high society of the time. In all these stories murders are

committed by people because they have no faith in the system to deliver justice of any kind. The world in which these characters move is therefore very similar to the world of Dashiell Hammett's fiction which is discussed in Chapter 8 with reference to the fiction of Leonardo Padura Fuentes. Pequeño sums up the series by saying:

> Los cuentos criminales de Lino Novás Calvo practican una creativa adapción de influencias provenentes de la novela negra estadounidense a la realidad cubana, una literatura donde se conjugan el interés de la fábula policial, una rara habilidad técnica y la preocupación por el hombre y sus desgarramientos, lo que permite iluminar zonas complejas del etorno social cubano en los primeros años cincuenta: el pandillerismo, el caciquismo, la corrupción, la manipulación de poder, entre otros muchos aspectos que de conjunto, caracterizan un medio social cerrado, vacio de solidaridad humana y sin otra solución posible que la violencia de los ofendidos.(1995:61)

Social comment in the detective genre is evident once more, but within a more creative aesthetic than before.

To complete this repertoire of crime narrative production before the revolution mention must also be made of the painter and writer, Leonel López Nussa, and the journalist, Gerardo de Valle. López Nussa wrote two humorous detective novels *El ojo de vidrio* (1955) and *El asesino de las rosas* (1957) under the pseudonym of Red Bloy. The books were published in Mexico with editions of 5,000 and 3,000 copies respectively. Neither are in the Biblioteca Nacional. Contrary to Álvarez and Otero's belief, it would appear that López Nussa and not Novás Calvo was the first Cuban author to write and publish a full length detective story. Del Valle published short stories in *Bohemia*. Additionally, in 1949, a 13 minute short film entitled *El diablo fugitivo o la ley contra el crimen* was released and was followed in 1950 by the feature film *Siete muertos a plazo fijo,* set in Havana.

In conclusion, it is simply not true that the detective genre was virtually uncultivated in Cuba or that it merely imitated foreign versions before the Revolution. Although Cuban detective fiction was to enjoy a relative boom after the 1959, it was not without its pre-revolutionary antecedents. The reasons why post-revolutionary critics played down its importance until recently is perhaps evidence what Williams called the selective tradition (see Chapter 1) at work in the revolutionary establishment. As shall be discussed further in Chapter 7, Cuban revolutionary critics were more interested in promoting the efforts of post-1959 writers . However, it is undeniable that in 1959, there was a ready demand for detective literature in the island so that the revolutionary boom in the genre that was to follow already had a base readership upon which to build. It is also clear that early authors produced a fiction that spoke to the Cuban reader of their times with much more relevance than has been recognised. Pre-revolutionary Cuban detective fiction (in common with the genre generally) was concerned with contemporary social and political events, and in some cases provided a critical perspective on social circumstances. In other cases, the output was commercialised and oriented towards the market. Thus it resembled the detective genre that is found in western consumerist societies and displayed the same tendencies towards sensationalism and stereotyping that is associated with such fiction. The influence of the United States was evident and some notable creations were obviously adaptations from the genre as it developed in the US. It is perhaps because of this association and the break with the island's neocolonial past that the revolution wished to make, that Cuban academics neglected this period. However, it is certain that the writers of the present day, such as Leonardo Padura Fuentes are recognising the importance of their predecessors. After the revolution, the genre was transformed, not only in form, but in terms of its readership and production becoming a new mass fiction to supply the demands of a newly literate population.

Notes

[1] Lisandro Otero in *Dissenters and Supporters in Cuba* (1987: 72): 'In 1958, book sales amounted to 0.2 per inhabitant, in the 1976-1980 period, sales were 5 to 6 books per inhabitant... 1200 titles with 42 million copies were published in Cuba in 1980.' According to Armando Hart Dávalos (1983: 24-25) the former Minister of Culture, less than one million books per year were printed prior to 1959 and by 1983 they were producing 50million. In 1959 there were 17,000 university students, by 1983 this figure had risen to 200,000.

[2] This is evident from a reading of the plot summary in *Cuba Cinematográfica* 1917. Photocopy of article in author's possession.

[3] An illuminating sensual (and possibly pejorative) connotation is offered by the word *fambá*. Ortiz in his *Glosario de afronegrismos* (1991: 193 first published in 1924) tells us that *fambá* is both the name of the ñáñigos' place of worship and a vulgar term meaning a person's behind, whereas Santiesteban (1985: 205) lists the definition merely as a masculine noun meaning 'trasero' (behind).

[4] In *The Speckled Band* the murder is effected by the use of a trained snake which the murderer has recently brought back from his travels in India. Holmes describes it as 'a swamp adder - the deadliest snake in India.' A red herring is provided in the story by a camp of gypsies outside the house who seem to be the most obvious suspects. They echo the mysterious Brahmins in Collins's *The Moonstone* (1992:34) who arrive at the Verinders' house in search of their diamond. Like the Gypsies in Doyle, the Brahmins are innocent. But they are seen to be proof of the curse associated with the theft of the gem, stolen from a sacred temple in India, which, by its possession seems to bring disaster on those who possess it. The butler, Betteridge, describes the situation thus: '..here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond - bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man... Who ever heard the like of it - in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country which rejoices in the blessings of the British Constitution?' For a detailed discussion of Conan Doyle's fascination with Empire, see Thompson (1993).

[5] The *Grupo Minorista* was formed following the so-called *Protesta de los Trece* against the sale, by the corrupt government of Alfredo Zayas in 1923, of the Santa Clara convent. The protest was led by the poet Martínez Villena. He and others in the group went on to form the *Minoristas*. According to Ana Cairo (1978: 34), the idea for the novel grew out of a desire to incorporate European ideas into Cuban literature. Although she found no direct documentary evidence as to the origin of the project, her understanding is that it came about because the group wished to experiment with avant-garde forms of literature. José Antonio Portuondo, in his preface to the 1993 edition of *Fantoches*, points out that the weekly sports and literature newspaper *El Fígaro* had published two novels prior to *Fantoches* 'using an identical plan' (1993: 6).

[6] Quoted in Atkins (1926: 312). For a brief review of the black rebellion see Thomas (1971: 514-24).

[7] See Thomas (1971: 514) for a full explanation of this grievance.

[8] See author's interview with Oscar Luís López in appendix 2.

[9] *Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion* (1979:144) lists sixteen Charlie Chan serials starring Warner Oland released between 1931 and 1936.

[10] Cuba's relative underdevelopment prior to the Revolution meant that governments were inefficient in the collection of statistics. No figures for radio ownership are available for the 1930s but by 1949, according to the *UN statistical yearbook* (quoted in Thomas 1971: 766), there were 595,000 radio sets in Cuba, more than one per family. A Census taken in 1919 showed that half the population of the island was illiterate although more than 90 per cent of the population of Havana could read (Thomas 1971: 1,112). López (1981:91) puts the national illiteracy rate at over 70 per cent in the 1930s

[11] López does not explain what he means by 'Falso suspenso' but presumably it means a contrived suspense i.e. nothing really happens after the cliff hanger ending.

[12] Information from ICAIC 'Cinemateca' archive, calle 23, Havana.

[13] The Cuban critic José M. Fernández Pequeño is currently trying to recover all of Novás Calvo's stories for re-edition in an anthology. See his article 'Lino Novás Calvo: Los raros del desarriago a la paradoja' *La Gaceta de Cuba* (6, 1995: 55-61).

Chapter 5

Justice beyond legality: The early development of the Cuban revolutionary crime novel

Justice! Justice is what you get when you're dead, here what you get is the law!
('Madson', BBC Television, May 13th 1996)

The revolution ushered in widespread social and economic reforms. The literacy campaign of 1960-2 eradicated the problem of illiteracy and land and labour reforms increased the incomes of the average citizen. For the first time, millions of Cubans not only had the ability to read, but had the luxury of leisure hours in which to pursue recreational activities. A massive book publishing programme was begun which put literature into the hands of people who had never had access to it before. As Seymour Menton (1978) has documented, this development gave rise to the development of a thriving literary community who began to write novels for the new society. New writing was fostered by a nationwide system of evening writing groups and authors were encouraged by a number of competitions for which the prize was publication. Surprisingly, despite its pre-revolutionary popularity, detective fiction did not immediately emerge and it took a decade before a Cuban writer produced the first post-revolutionary detective work. This chapter examines the origins of the post-revolutionary genre and the way in which was deliberately encouraged, as both an entertainment and a means to inculcate the masses in the correct way to behave in a socialist society. As such, the Cuban revolutionary genre acquired characteristics that differentiated it from genres in western capitalist societies. These characteristics will be explained with reference to the concerns expressed by Marx, Engels and Gramsci

discussed in Chapter 1. They also presented difficulties for the author which are unique to the socialist system. These will also be discussed.

In the words of the Cuban author and critic Leonardo Padura Fuentes, the annual literary competition organised by the Cuban Union of Artists and Writers, UNEAC, in 1969:

> [...]recibía una tímida, inesperada y tal vez hasta simpática conmoción: entre las obras enviadas al concurso aparecía por primera vez en la historia patria una novela policíaca cubana. Se titulaba *Enigma para un domingo* y aparecía firmada por un ingeniero de nombre Ignacio Cárdenas Acuña.(1988: 55)

According to Padura Fuentes the work barely received a mention from the three judges of the competition at that time. He adds, somewhat ironically, that while the prize winner of that year is now forgotten, *Enigma para un domingo* (Arte y Literatura, 1971) is today a classic of the Cuban genre and its first 'best-seller'. Since then it has had three more editions, the most recent in 1985.

Such was *Enigma para un domingo*'s popularity that a decision was taken by the Cuban Ministry of the Interior, MININT, (in charge of the national police and state security) to create an annual competition. The *Concurso Aniversario del Triunfo de la Revolución* began in 1972 and was originally intended as a competition open only to members or ex-members of the security and police services. But in response to demands from professional writers, after the first year it became a national competition with the result that it fostered a boom in detective writing in Cuba. Since 1972, Cuba's output of *literatura policíaca* has exceeded that of any other Latin American country except Argentina in the same period.[1] By 1986 (the latest date that a national bibliography was compiled), 36 full length novels had been published along with 15 collections of short stories, 13 testimonials (a sub-genre consisting of literary versions of real-life cases), two children's novels and four plays.[2] Many of these, such as the

works of former police officer, Luis Adrián Betancourt, were immensely popular. His *Aquí las arenas son más limpias* (Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1979) which won the MININT prize, sold 140,000 copies in Cuba and 110,000 in the Soviet Union.[3]

The reason for the popularity of these works, I would suggest, is the long-established Cuban enthusiasm for detective fiction in general which was surveyed in the last chapter. The revolutionary authorities published foreign classics of the genre in translation before *Enigma para un domingo* appeared. The editorial *Dragón* had been publishing Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Arthur Conan Doyle for some time.[4] The success of the particularly Cuban genre might also relate to the fact that the experience of the revolution, taking place against the Batista dictatorship, and its aftermath of destabilization by the CIA and terrorist activities by former Batista supporters, had given (and continues to give - see appendix 1) the Cuban readership a real life experience of the stuff of detective and espionage fiction. Luis Adrián Betancourt, who took part in the clandestine struggle against Batista before his overthrow, explains:

> [...] la violencia impuesta por el imperialismo norteamericano [...] matizó nuestras vidas con una rica experiencia que de ninguna manera podía quedar al margen del quehacer literario.
> La Contrarevolución, la piratería, el terrorismo, la explosión de La Coubre, el incendio de El Encanto [ships in Havana harbour] , las redes de la CIA y el Pentágono, las infiltraciones, Girón, la crisis de octubre, los planes de atentados, el estallido en vuelo de un avión de Cubana, el asesinato de un diplomático nuestro en una céntrica avenida de Washington. ¿Cómo podían quedar fuera de los intereses creativos de nuestros escritores? (1982: 2)

Thus, for example the story of *Enigma para un domingo* opens in post-revolutionary Cuba with the narrator, Jugler Ares, being interrogated by the

The convocation of the 1994 MININT literature prize for detective fiction

police for his participation in a counter-revolutionary group and for killing its leader. In answer to his interrogators, he gives an account of political corruption, prostitution, blackmail, robbery and murder in pre-revolutionary Cuba. The novel's realistic depiction of pre-revolutionary Havana and its juxtaposition with the exemplary nature of post-revolutionary society struck a popular chord with the newly liberated and literate Cuban public. Betancourt adds:

> *Enigma*... demostró que los lectores cubanos querían lo suyo, que les importaba más un escenario habanero que los jardines de Lauriston. (1986: 3)

Cubans wanted fiction to reflect their own reality. The MININT competition provided the response to this demand but one which clearly marked a departure from classic capitalist detective fiction:

> Entonces vino el concurso, y con él un jurado de escritores consagrados, amigos del género, que avalaban con sus nombres y su crédito profesional el atrevimiento de haberlo abordado con un enfoque nuevo no necesariamente sumiso al Decálogo de Van Dyne o a la acostumbrada novela problema. (1986: 4)

Betancourt is alluding to the fact that the formula of the capitalist detective novel is not entirely appropriate to a revolutionary socialist society and in particular, Cuba. The 'decalogue' of Van Dyne, to which he refers, was not ten but twenty commandments on how a detective story should be written. SS Van Dyne was the pseudonym of Willard Huntingdon Wright (1889-1939) the American detective writer and creator of the famous character Philo Vance. Van Dyne first published his rules in 1928 in *The American Magazine*, New York. They included:

> Secret societies and the Mafia should have no part in a detective story. An author who makes use of them will be transferring himself to the realm of the adventure of espionage novel.
> ...the writer should abstain from choosing the criminal from among the professional criminal classes. Such criminals are the domain of the professional police and not authors of detective novels. Common crimes are vulgar and routine... while the

> crimes of an outstanding religious figures or an aged famous man ...are really enchanting.
> ...the motive must be entirely personal. International conspiracies and high politics should be left to espionage fiction. (Rainov 1978: 90-91)

Among the other rules was the advice that the detective must be 'a gentleman' and a detective for the pleasure of the intellectual challenge, rather than a policeman. Given such limitations it is not surprising that these novels were considered unsuitable by Communists eager to portray the workings of (and create the ideological basis for) an egalitarian, collective society. What is perhaps more surprising, is that when the announcement for the first MININT competition was published in the police magazine *Moncada,* the sponsors also published the rules of Van Dyne as a guide for the would be entrants![5] This sparked a series of protests from Cuban intellectuals who pointed out the unsuitability of such novels in the Cuban context. Among them were Armando Cristóbal Pérez, a former policeman and author, and the Marxist literary critic, José Antonio Portuondo. Their analyses of the capitalist genre and suggestions for a new type of detective novel form the basis for what they claim to be a uniquely Cuban formula.

In an interview in Havana, in November 1995, Cristóbal Pérez told me that the publication of Van Dyne's rules prompted him to write an article in *Bohemia* magazine to explain why the genre needed to be changed in order to be seen as relevant in Cuba's new society. The article's title clearly states the objective: 'El género policial y la lucha de clases: un reto para los escritores revolucionarios'.[6] It should be remembered here that this article was published in 1973, at the height of the *quinquenio gris* (see Chapter 3) in which there was a conscious drive by the Cuban authorities to politicize art and culture in general. In this context, the birth of the Cuban 'socialist' detective genre may be seen as a deliberate attempt at social engineering, the kind of which

Gramsci (see Chapter 1) and Guevara (Chapter 3) would not approve. Critics of the Cuban revolution obviously see this as further evidence of 'Stalinism'.

According to Cristóbal Pérez, all art and literature is in some way 'a reflection of reality'. [7] The detective genre, having its origins in capitalist society and because it deals with the subject of deviance, evidences the class struggle more than any other genre. Not only does it feature at its core the confrontation between the forces of the bourgeois state and the criminal classes, it also manifests within its structure the workings of the free market:

> ...las propias características del régimen burgués propician la existencia de un aparente segundo agente que participa del enfrentamiento a la actividad delictiva: el investigador privado. Porque también en esta esfera de la actividad social se origina un mercado. Y el ataque a la defensa del orden se convierte en mercancías. (1982: 298)

This undesirable state of affairs, he argues, does have an advantage for the writer of detective stories. Because it adds a third element to what would otherwise be a potentially boring two-way confrontation:

> De esta manera se produce una relación entre tres elementos: DELINCUENTE - POLICÍA ESTATAL - DETECTIVE-PRIVADO. Es indudable que la existencia del detective privado añada a la contradicción fundamental (POLICÍA ESTATAL-DELINCUENTE) un contrapunto o tensión que propicia un enriquecimiento dramático de las situaciones. (1982: 299)

Pérez points out that *Enigma para un domingo* successfully made use of these three elements because the action in the novel takes place before the revolution when the main protagonist, Jugler Ares, was a private detective. The novel is a pastiche of Raymond Chandler novels. Ares spends the entire novel on the run from the cops, pursuing the real culprit so that he can clear his name. While this is an efficient way to demonstrate the legal and moral corruption of pre-revolutionary society and while the

obvious political message was well received, nevertheless, for Cristóbal Pérez, such a plot construction would be impossible in a story set in post-revolutionary Cuba:

> En el estado revolucionario el órgano especializado es el único que realiza el enfrentamiento. Aquí no es concebible la existencia de un detective privado. (1982: 302)

For this reason, Cristóbal Pérez suggests that the dramatic triangle might be restored by the inclusion of the Cuban people in the formula:

> ... este [el pueblo] colabora con la policía sin ambigüedad alguna, porque con ello apoya su propia clase en el poder político: el Estado Socialista.
> De manera que, aunque con un contenido distinto que se manifiesta en una nueva correlación de fuerzas, la existencia de los tres elementos permitirá, desde el punto de vista literario utilizar recursos dramáticos semejantes a los que han distinguido el género tradicionalmente. (1982: 302)

The following year, 1973, the sponsors of the MININT competition put forward new guidelines for participants. One of the judges, Francisco Garzón Céspedes, wrote:

> Este concurso, [...] señala en su convocatoria que las obras presentadas correspondientes al género policíaco, tendrán un carácter didáctico y serán estímulo a la prevención y vigilancia de todos las actividades antisociales o contra el poder del pueblo, y este ha sido su propósito y es determinante en su desarrollo. (1983: 6-7)

Cristóbal Pérez's view was thus adopted to the letter and his novel, *La ronda de las rubíes*, won the prize that year. This novel will be discussed in Chapter 6.

La ronda de los rubíes was published in the same year as José Antonio Portuondo's book of criticism, *Astrolabio* (1973), which includes various essays on the subject of detective fiction. In 'La novela policial revolucionaria' he develops Cristóbal Pérez's detective-state police-criminal triangle by discussing it terms of the notions of legality and justice. He divides the capitalist genre into three types: *La novela problema; La novela negra* and *La novela de espionage*. As we shall see, these are not only genre

distinctions; for Portuondo each particular type pertains broadly to a different chronological period.

The first, the puzzle novel, includes the classics of detective fiction such as Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. As we have seen, these stories and novels appeared in the nineteenth century and defined the genre until the great depression. In these novels, writes Pérez, the forces of law are invariably seen to be just but generally ineffectual. This type of novel:

> [...]constituye una defensa de la legalidad burguesa vulnerada por el crimen, y en la cual un individuo excepcionalmente dotado, generalmente civil, ajeno al aparato oficial, tiene que luchar contra la estereotipia y la lentitud mental y hasta la estupidez rampante del cuerpo legal cuya rigidez estorba a la justicia. (1973: 127)

The second type, as discussed in the Introduction, emerged out of the great depression in the United States. *La novela negra* is best characterized, according to Portuondo, by the work of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler:

> En los dos encontramos a un individuo duro, mezcla de gangster y de caballero andante que realiza una defensa ilegal de la justicia frente a la dominante injusticia legal. (1973:128)

He explains that in the puzzle novel, the bourgeois legal system is accepted as just. The forces of law and order are invariably stupid, but honest. They need an amateur detective to help them solve the crime but the guilty are always caught. The detectives never stoop to performing illegal acts themselves.

However, in the second type, as a reflection of the breakdown of the capitalist order in the 1930s, the bourgeois forces of law are depicted as unjust and very often corrupt. In this case the detective may resort to illegal methods in order to defend the notion of justice. For Portuondo, these are features that apply only to capitalist societies and

therefore only to capitalist fiction. In revolutionary fiction the detective can neither be unjust nor act illegally, by the same token the legal system can never be corrupt.

For Portuondo the pattern of degeneration reaches its most acute form in the spy novel which developed principally after the Second World War with the onset of the Cold War. The superhero, James Bond, for instance, or the novels of James Hadley Chase are no more than

> [...]la abierta defensa de la legalidad injusta del imperialismo aunque para ello, haya que violar las normas de esa misma legalidad. El agente es a veces delincuente consciente de su delito, realizado en aras de un servicio al estado, recurriendo a los más bajos menestres, si es preciso, el chantaje incluido, naturalmente. (1973: 132)

So finally the protagonist acts in defence of injustice and uses unjust methods to carry out his purpose.

Portuondo's account corresponds generally with the consensus view of the development of the genre, as outlined in the Introduction, except perhaps in his view of the espionage genre. What differentiates Portuondo's and Cristóbal Pérez's analyses is the morality implicit in their approach. It is evident that they advocate clearly a need for the socialist literature to be educational and uplifting at the same time as entertaining. The role of literature is not merely to entertain, it also has a didactic purpose.

Portuondo thus sees 'un juego diálectico' between the concepts of legality and justice in the detective genre. In the puzzle novel they coincide: 'es justo lo que es legal'. In the noir novel they are antagonistic: 'no es justo lo que es legal y lo que es ilegal es justo'. In espionage fiction: 'no hay justicia ni legalidad'.

In his view, Cuban revolutionary fiction does not distinguish between the notions of legality and justice because in Cuban society they are one and the same thing: 'Es legal lo que es justo'. The law must be just because it is socialist revolutionary law

enacted in the interest and through the actions of the people. The forces of the law therefore must also act in a just manner. In Cuban detective fiction, the hero has to be a member of the people's police force, entrusted by the people 'en poder' to act on their behalf. This, he writes, is something new:

> La novela policial nacida con la revolución cubana aporta una nota nueva al género y es la que significa la defensa de la justicia y de la legalidad revolucionarias, identificadas, realizadas, no sólo por un individuo normal, sin genialidades, sino además, con la colaboración colectiva del aparato policial y legal del estado socialista y la muy eficaz y constante ayuda de los organismos de masa, principalmente los Cómites de la Defensa de la Revolución. En ella se cumple el principio leninista de la elaboración colectiva y la responsibilidad individual[...]La novela mantiene los rasgos esenciales del género, pero trae este nuevo sentido de identificación de justicia y legalidad socialistas, y sobre todo, el concepto de realización colectiva, como autodefensa del nuevo orden social revolucionario. (1973: 132)

It is important to note at this stage that Portuondo was not alone among Marxist critics in taking this view. The East German scholar Ernst Kaemmel made a similar analysis of the degeneration of the capitalist genre published ten years earlier in the DDR publication *Neue deutsche Literatur* and reproduced in translation by Glenn W. Most and William W. Stowe in *The Poetics of Murder* (1983):

> [...] thirty years of production of classic criminal novels have exhausted the motifs and made the types rigid and stereotyped, so that the uncreative, ever-recurring method of portrayal has given the classic criminal novel the characteristics of a barren system. It was from this dead end that the hard-boiled authors, who oriented towards Hemingway, thought they were escaping. Suddenly - what was impossible in classic detective novels- detailed descriptions of murder and of brutal mistreatment appear, the police and the detective are portrayed as amoral gangster types, social life appears to be a swamp of corruption. The hero has changed into an unromantic cynic. Negative phenomena of social life are accepted as facts without any relevance [...]The transition to the gangster milieu has been completed. (Most and Stowe eds.1983: 61)

Writing in the early sixties before the espionage genre became widely established, Kaemmel does not elaborate on this latter sub-genre as Portuondo does, however, Kaemmel arrives at the same conclusion as Portuondo and Cristobál Pérez: detective literature of the 'hard-boiled' school is impossible under socialism:

> [...] it is scarcely conceivable that the investigation of a criminal in a socialist society could be the solo performance of a private man, an outsider, if necessary against the collective work of the police and of the organs of state, indeed against the cooperation of the populace. And in this sense one can conceive of the development from classic schematic literature to a really modern criminal literature, whose main purpose would then no longer be to pass the time and to titillate the nerves. (1983: 61)

Kaemmel's conclusion implies that such a development had not taken place in socialist countries, but this is untrue. The Cuban genre was by no means the first attempt at writing a socialist detective fiction. There have been numerous attempts at adaptations of genre to a socialist society. Among the earliest were the adventure novels known as 'red Pinkertons' produced in the Soviet Union during the 1920s. As Robert Russell (1982) has documented, these stories were parodies of the North American 'Nat Pinkerton' novels that circulated widely in translation in Tsarist Russia. Just as the popularity of the capitalist genre in pre-revolutionary Cuba had encouraged revolutionary Cuban writers (see Chapter 4), Russell suggests that this was a primary factor in prompting young Soviet writers to experiment:

> Many writers felt that the extraordinary quickening pace of life during the Civil War and NEP period could not adequately be expressed by the traditional Russian psychological novel. After many decades in which Russian literature was dominated by slow-moving novels, writers were now turning to something more rapid, more immediate in order to capture the spirit of the age. (1982: 392-3)

Another factor was the influence of the cinema in which adventure type plots were popularised. According to Russell, the writers of these mass-produced novels parodied

the forms of films and detective novels but replaced the detective heroes by workers. This was encouraged, he writes, because the genre was seen as 'an opportunity to impart a political message to a wide readership'(1983:397). But this also worked against the writers because what he calls 'crude ideological statements' with 'an insincere ring' threaten the balance of the works. This, too is a familiar and obvious problem which faced the Cuban authors.

The problem, as Amelia S. Simpson has pointed out, is that 'features like the collectivisation of the investigative effort make transparent the ideological dimension and the didactic aims of the text, especially because of their impact on narrative strategy'(1990: 104). The danger is that the texts might descend into explicit propagandising. To be fair to Portuondo, he warned against this happening in Cuba:

> *El teque*, es decir, la exposición apologética de la ideología revolucionaria, la propaganda elemental y primaria, el elogio desembozado de los procedimientos revolucionarios, es la forma en que puede degenerar la novela policial entre nosotros. (1973: 131)

Simpson examines the various ways in which Cuban authors have attempted to deal with these limitations. Her findings and that of other Cuban critics are discussed in the next chapter. As an introduction, it is worth noting that, as Russell discovered in relation to the 'red Pinkerton' novels, the problem of making a credible and genuinely popular art form that is constrained by political requirements is not one faced only by Cuban authors. It is clear that this difficulty is shared in Socialist societies. Later, in the Soviet Union, the desire to use this genre as a tool of education placed limits upon the aesthetic quality of the works. In her study of the work of the Soviet detective author Arkadij Adamov, Barbara Göbler (1987) points to what she calls the 'pathetic' and 'socially directed' lectures that soviet detectives tend to give their captives which are a part of the pedagogical project of the Soviet genre:

> Diese pathetischen und wirklichkeitsfern wirkenden Äußerungen sind durch den pädagogishen Anspruch der sowjetischen Kriminal-literatur begründet.(1982: 73)[8]

Göbler explains that whereas in the West many different types of detective characters are possible, only one is acceptable in the Soviet Union; the diligent policeman who never questions the social order (1987:58). As we have seen, this is precisely the kind of detective called for by the Cubans. So politically worthy is Adamov's fiction that the novels invariably end with the criminal being captured alive and offered a chance to reintegrate into society. These policemen never transgress the regulations. These constraints, while not always trivialising the novels, nevertheless weaken the detective characters' psychological credibility:

> Es hat sich aber gezisgt, daß sich innerhalb des ideologischen Rahmans unterscheidliche Detectivtypen, wie etwa der aktionische oder de reflektierende Detektiv, darstellen lassen und daß aber die prsychologische Glaubwürdigkeit mit zunehmender Ideologisierung leidet. (1987: 66)[9]

Similarly, according to an article by Peter Green in *The Guardian* newspaper (March 25, 1999), *The 30 Cases of Major Zeman,* a hugely successful police series in 1970s Czechoslovakia, caused a controversy when it was rebroadcast in the Czech Republic because the real victims of the old regime were offended by its whitewashing of the facts about the Communist period. The generally sympathetic characterisation of the 'people's policeman' contrasted with the demonised anti-Communist, pro-Western villains:

> Introduced in honour of the 30th anniversary of Czechoslovakia's Communist police force, the show took its plots from celebrated crimes, each reworked to turn party members into heroes, and capitalists, greedy farmers and hippies into enemies of socialism. (Green 1999:10)

To summarize, the arguments discussed in Chapter One which were first posited by Engels and later elaborated by Gramsci and Williams concerning the need for literature

to create a credible and meaningful world are sharply illustrated by these examples from other socialist countries.[10] As I have argued, Gramsci and Williams were both of the view that the best literature rises organically out of society rather than deliberately cultivated. The problem is curiously coincidental with the revolutionary act itself. Whereas the revolutionary party takes upon itself to create a new society, it falls upon the intelligentsia associated with it to create art to express it. This necessitates the creation of credible worlds in which the desired values are expressed, before the reality encapsulating those values exists. What the critics tend to miss is the fact that as well as offering a broader scope for characterisation and plot, the capitalist detective genre represents a reality that actually exists. The world of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett is real in the sense that Al Capone and Bugsy Segal were historical figures. Conan Doyle's murky, foggy and frightening London also existed in a real sense. The action and characters of detective novels may be fictional, but the worlds in which they are set is easily and poetically invoked because it is familiar. In my view, this is an overlooked obstacle to creating a socialist genre. As the ideal socialist society by definition has yet to be created, the world in which a socialist novel must be set is not yet credible. This is different from the problem that confronts the science fiction writer who must create a credible future world because invariably those future worlds are merely more technologically advanced versions of our present reality. Consider, for example, the acclaimed thriller *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott 1982) which is a transposition of the Hammett/Chandler plot to a dystopian future Los Angeles. Similarly, a novel such as *The Name of the Rose* (Umberto Eco 1983) which transposes the detective story to medieval Italy deals with a historically verifiable reality, a society that already existed. The world demanded of socialist authors is one which is yet to be. Ironically, the socialist novel is written in order to help the creation of such a world.

The problem of creating a credible 'new world' or utopia in which to set the action of the novel is therefore added to the task of the author. As we shall see in the next Chapter, some Cuban authors deliberately avoided setting their novels in Cuba because of the limitations on trying to convey revolutionary reality, the fact is that it is easier to set the novel in capitalism because a credible dystopia is already available.

Notes

[1] See Amelia S. Simpson, *Detective Fiction from Latin America* (1990: 97).

[2] *Literatura cubana policíaca, Bibliografía (1959-Marzo de 1986)* Compiled by the Departamento de Investigaciones Bibliográficas de la Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba and published in the magazine *Enigma* Sept. 1986: 39-40. (See appendix 3).

[3] Luis Adrián Betancourt: 'La gestión profiláctica de la literatura policial.' (Havana: unpublished, 1982: 2).

[4] A list compiled for the author by the Editorial Letras Cubanas in 1995 listed a total of 137 titles published since 1961 in author's possession.

[5] According to an interview conducted with Armando Cristóbal Pérez, November 1995, Havana. (Transcript of tape in author's possession).

[6] Originally published in *Bohemia*, (Oct. 4, 1973). All references here from Luis Rogelio Nogueras ed., *Por la novela policial* (1982: 298-305).

[7] Cristóbal Pérez in Nogueras (1982: 298).

[8] These pathetic and unrealistic remarks are originated in educational claims based upon soviet crime literature.

[9] However, it has become apparent that within the ideological framework, all these different types of detective, be they active or reflective types, show that psychological credibility suffers with increases in ideology.

[10] The problem is not one confined to the detective genre or socialist societies. See, for example, Allan L. Woll's analysis of the problems confronting the authors of socialist comic books in Allende's Chile (1976) or the difficulties experienced by a BBC soap opera team trying to create a new 'capitalist' serial for Kazakhstan TV examined in the BBC1 Omnibus documentary *East of Eastenders* produced by Jemma Jupp and broadcast in the UK on July 7 1997.

Chapter 6

Heroes and villains: The revolutionary crime genre 1971-91

The Cuban critic José Fernández Pequeño (1994) agrees that the revolutionary Cuban detective genre intended from the outset to create a distinct literature which would be relevant to the new society that the revolution was building: 'capaz de arrojar el lastre burgués y ponerse al servicio del proceso revolucionario' (1994: 13). However, this effort, he concludes, was largely frustrated by what he regards as a lack of verisimilitude, 'una pobre elaboración del material de la vida que se pretendía recrear literariamente'(1994: 14). This chapter discusses the attempts of a number of the post-revolutionary detective novelists to serve the revolution and at the same time assesses how well they succeeded in producing convincing portrayals of revolutionary life.

Among the novelists to be considered is Armando Cristóbal Pérez (b.1938) who is regarded as the first exponent of the post-revolutionary detective novel (Rogelio Nogueras 1982: 28). In his novels, Pérez applies the formula he expounded in his essay, *El género policial y la lucha de clases* (1973), on which he elaborated further in an interview in August 1992 (See Chapter 5). In general, this formula can be summarised as follows:

1. The crime and its investigation should not merely build up an ingenious and entertaining plot but should also present explicit comments on the real life-or-death struggle between revolutionary Cuba and its enemies.

2. The hero is radically different from the traditional bourgeois detective. He is not an individualist and should be as normal a person as possible who works as part of a team and is aided by technological methods in the resolution of the crime.

3. The idea of the collective resolution of the crime is emphasised by the inclusion of the people or, as Cristóbal Pérez puts it, 'el pueblo en poder', in the investigation, usually represented by members of the Comités por la Defensa de la Revolución.

4. In their representation of delinquency and legality, the novels are intended to be a means of demonstrating, in a literary manner, the special nature of the new revolutionary society.

This last point was explained by Cristóbal Pérez as a major divergence from the classic detective novel because in Cuba even simple robberies are viewed as political rather than civil crimes:

> Para nosotros, decimos, tanto lo político como lo social están unidos. En nuestro caso [...] si alguien va a un almacén y se roba diez cajas de cigarros, eso no es un simple caso de un robo común porque en las condiciones en que nos encontramos, esos cigarros tienen dueños porque cada persona sabe la cantidad de cigarros que les toca en la cuota, entonces a robarlos no estás robando un dueño que dice: "Bueno esos son perdidos de mi negocio y el seguro va a recompensármelos." Eso no implica ningún problema político sino es un simple hecho de que le robaron. Pero en el caso nuestro hoy día es un problema político porque hay un número importante de personas que viven en este lugar que no pueden consumir los cigarros que les tocaba y no hay de donde para sacar más porque no hay. Cuando alguien roba por lo tanto ese delito es social pero al mismo tiempo es político porque se afecta a las personas que viven en el lugar. No es un administrador que está robado pero la comunidad entera. (Interview with author, 1992)

According to Pérez, all Cuban detective novels exhibit these four elements to varying degrees, although not all the novels emphasise them all in equal measure (Interview with the author 1992). However, there is no doubt as to the limitations this formula places upon an author.

Nevertheless, such limitations were understood by Cuban critics and writers themselves. They had arisen because of the need, as Luis Rogelio Nogueras puts it, to

> [...] superar los esquemas que lastran la novela policial en los países capitalistas, para covertirla en un instrumento de educación, al mismo tiempo que de homenaje y reconocimiento a la labor de los combatientes, clases y oficiales del MININT. (1982: 39).

In Chapter Five we have noted how Amelia S. Simpson, in her comments on the Cuban detective genre (1990), argues that the elimination of ingredients which reflect features of capitalist ideology weakens the effectiveness of the conventional narrative of detective stories. There is also the problem that Cuban society itself does not work in the same way as the free-market societies of developed capitalism. As Rodolfo Pérez Valero explains:

> En el capitalismo, un delincuente tiene muchas posibilidades de escapar, de esconderse, y el escritor puede jugar con esas varientes para dar un mayor interés a la acción de su novela; en nuestra sociedad socialista, como es lógico, la identidad entre el pueblo y gobierno, entre el pueblo y las fuerzas de la justicia, y el hecho de que la propiedad privada practicamente no existe, reducen en gran medida las posibilidades del delincuente de delatar el peso de la ley, pero reducen también las situaciones posibles en que puede usar el escritor a la hora de armar el argumento; ello sin contar la responsibilidad de que la imagen total de la novela tenga un equilibrio en concordancia con la realidad del país y no se dé un panorama falso o exagerado de la delincuencia en esta etapa en la cual la inmensa mayoría de nuestro pueblo construye el socialismo y hace sus propias leyes. (Quoted in Francisco Garzón Céspedes 1975: 162)

Taking all this into account it is easy to understand that the narrative strategy of the authors is severely affected. As mentioned earlier, substituting a 'classless' team of investigators for the superior individual hero, replacing a marginal population with an actively interventionist 'empowered people' and making the criminal more 'visible' against the background of a vigilant society, removes most of the devices which sustain suspense and delay the denouement in capitalist fiction.

Another factor, not mentioned by Simpson, but recognised by Cuban critics such as Pequeño and Padura Fuentes, is the authors' lack of expertise. Since the genre was fostered by a competition organised by the Ministry of Interior and open to all Cubans, many of the works submitted are written by retired policemen and veterans of the revolutionary struggle, whose writing skills are relatively poor. In fact, Cristóbal Pérez and Luis Adrián Betancourt, two of the early successful novelists, were retired policemen. Cristóbal Pérez's lack of experience shows in the inconsistencies of the narrative voice.

An examination of two of Pérez's novels: *Explosión en Tallapiedra* and *La ronda de las rubíes* will illustrate how lack of skill and the already listed ideologically motivated changes to the standard features of the detective genre affected the narrative. This discussion will lead into an examination of a number of common traits found in the Cuban genre. Using examples from a variety of other novels the main weaknesses of the genre will be indicated.

Explosión en Tallapiedra was the first novel to win the MININT's Concurso del Triunfo de la Revolución in 1971 but it was not published until 1980 because it contained references to real events which the authorities did not consider opportune to be made public prior to that date (Interview with the author 1992). Thus, as Pequeño points out, it has the curious characteristic of being the very first revolutionary detective novel but, because of the publication delay, of having no influence whatsoever on the development of the genre in its early years (Pequeño 1994: 65).

When this novel was written, not even detective novels by eastern European or Soviet authors such as Julian Semionov or Bogomil Rainov had been published in Cuba so that the only antecedents were 'bourgeois' novels and an espionage series produced for Cuban radio and television during the 1960s called *Sector 40* (Pequeño 1984: 65).

Sector 40 reconstructed real episodes of heroism from the battle against counter-revolutionary activities between 1960 and 1965, a period when the fledgling revolution faced Operation Mongoose, during which the United States, on the orders of President Kennedy, fostered a terrorist campaign of bombings aimed at destabilising the country economically and politically (see appendix 1).[1] It was on this TV series and his reading of bourgeois fiction that Cristóbal Pérez based his essay on how to write a socialist detective novel:

> Apareció la novela policíaco después de casi diez años en que estaban apareciendo en la televisión y en el cine. Por lo tanto donde primero se apareció no fue en libros sino en guiones. Ya existía una larga experiencia en Cuba desde los años sesenta con seriales o series de la televisión donde trabajaban estos argumentos, donde se fueron caracterizando estas circunstancias. (Interview with author 1992)

Explosión is a counter-espionage novel centred on the Tallapiedra electricity power plant which serves Havana. The plot revolves around a CIA inspired conspiracy to blow it up, which, as the delay in publication implies, really did exist.

Pérez invents a fictional narrator, Ulises, and the action of the novel is framed by the interjections of this narrator who begins with the following disclaimer (also neatly describing the means by which the story is constructed):

> En realidad estas cuartillas no son otra cosa que un conjunto de notas apresuradas, grabaciones y transcriptas y copias de documentos. Aquí se mezclan todavía, sin una sabia elaboración, fragmentos de realidad e intentos de literatura. (1980: 15)

Ulises has been recruited by a police lieutenant to write the story in a way which people will enjoy but which will also convey a revolutionary message:

> Una novela policial. Esa era su solicitud. Fiel a la realidad hasta donde fuera posible. Que interesara al lector. Y, además, con las particularidades del país, que las tiene en esto como en cualquier otra cosa. (1980: 15-16)

Thus the novel adopts a conventional structure in which there is an embedded narrative with two parallel lines of action. The first is the framing story that identifies the narrator and his task of writing the novel given to him by the unnamed lieutenant, and the second is the principal detective action, which concerns the terrorist attack on Tallapiedra.

Ulises's story, functioning as a frame, is told in the first person. The main action, as the narrator presents it, is composed of fragments of the story as told by the lieutenant himself (statements and messages), as well as various scenes which Ulises reconstructs. In the main action, therefore, there are two narrative points of view: that of the lieutenant, who uses the first person plural or the third person singular, and that of Ulises, who always employs the third person singular. This switching of narrative voice is confusing, even, it seems, for Pérez himself who begins the novel using the first person singular position of the protagonist Ulises and then switches inexplicably to an omniscient third person narrative on page 31.

The narrator-protagonist's task is to be as faithful to reality as possible, yet this is a reality truncated by the exigencies of trying to create a vehicle that expounds the ideology and correct mode of behaviour for a socialist society. This comes at the expense of other important elements such as suspense. As Pequeño comments (1994, 66), despite Félix Pita Rodríguez's eulogy in the preface to the 1980 edition which states bluntly that 'todos los elementos que integran el perfil clásico de la novela policial, estaban en ella' (1980: 7-9), it is impossible to find in *Explosión* any of the elements of suspense that a traditional detective novel employs. The aim of the conspirators is known from the beginning of the story; the culprits' identities are also known from the beginning and their characters are presented without any ambiguity; and there are no red herrings, false clues, or even a plausible alternative explanation

presented to the reader. It is therefore not a mystery story in the traditional sense. The plot is not concerned with who or what has done a misdeed, but rather when and how a misdeed is to be done. This narrative structure is more typical of the spy genre than the detective story. As the North American critic Glenn W. Most explains:

> The plot of a mystery is retrospective; it looks back to an event that happened before, at or shortly after its beginning, and, knowing that it has already occurred, asks how it happened. The plots of spy stories, on the other hand, tend to be prospective: they are directed toward an event that has not yet occurred and that must be either prevented (the threat against England must be warded off) or performed (the enemy must be given false information). (1983: 354)

The course of Cristóbal Pérez's narrative does not traverse two points in the past but begins from a point in the present and travels forward, towards a future point in which a counter-revolutionary act is going to take place. So many Cuban novels take this form that there is a consistent blurring in the distinction between the espionage and detective genre. In *Explosión en Tallapiedra* suspense is provided by the investigators not knowing exactly when the act will take place and in the reader having to follow the investigation to the point when the authorities can capture all the conspirators red-handed. Unfortunately, this results in the novel becoming little more than a series of messages between the Cuban CIA agent (now acting under orders from the Cuban security forces) and the CIA HQ in which the Cuban side tries to trick the CIA into divulging the plan. We know from page 42, much less than halfway through the novel, that the Cuban authorities, thanks to an informer, have enough information to crack the counter-revolutionary conspiracy whenever they wish. What they really want is to capture as many of the conspirators as possible and to do that means waiting as long as possible before making their move. Thus there is a definite lack of intrigue, a fact

signalled from the beginning by the lieutenant who, on giving his instructions to the narrator on how to write, declares:

> Y a mí, exclamé con el mayor énfasis posible, no me interesan tanto la intriga o los enigmas para escribir una novela de género, como el significado humano de las relaciones entre hombres que se enfrentan, revolución y contrarrevolución, espionaje y contraespionaje. (1980: 16-17)

The characters in the novel are no more than vehicles for the representation of this conflict and thus verge on stereotypes which demonstrate particular aspects or attitudes towards the revolutionary struggle. In this sense the problems identified by Gramsci for the creation of a 'willed' art, as discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Five, are inherent to the way in which Cristóbal Pérez writes. It is clear that the verisimilitude, so admired by Engels in Balzac, is absent from this novel. The weakness is precisely that the author's views are not disguised and expressed through characters who are too obviously vehicles for propaganda.

In the opening chapter the informant, Néstor, admits that 'no estoy integrado a la Revolución' (1980, 20) but slowly, through his relationship with Ulises, he becomes more committed. By the end of the novel he expresses a desire to be like Ulises, though he doubts his ability to achieve this. This ability for a negative character to reform himself is a common feature in Cuban detective novels and also in the detective stories produced in other socialist countries, as described by Barbara Göbler in her study of the work of Akardi Adamov and Georgi Vajner.[2] It is in the description of how Néstor moves from being sceptical to being fully integrated in the revolution where the novel slips into overt didacticism, made all the more clumsy on account of the brevity of the passages describing this profound transformation. Four short episodes on pages 19, 31, 64 and 97 are insufficient to portray anything other than a superficial picture of the character. It is impossible therefore for the reader to relate to Néstor as a

real person and his conversion lacks any dramatic justification. This inconsistency is worsened by the switch in narrative position occurring in the second scene in which Néstor appears on page 31. Up to this point the narrator (Ulises) has maintained a subjective point of view but suddenly and without explanation he manages to penetrate the interior of the Néstor's mind. Thus the reader does not witness the gradual conversion of Néstor and is not allowed to wonder whether or not Néstor will 'come through', but instead is given a direct and privileged look into his consciousness by a suddenly omniscient narrator. Quite how Ulises is able to see into Néstor's mind is never explained.

The relationship between Néstor and Ulises finally becomes the justification for rather forced and inauthentic dialogue, such as the following:

> —¿Aun así? —es Néstor quien habla.
> Ulises calla durante unos momentos y al salir de una nueva curva, responde.
> — Aun así. Yo nunca dudaría. Cuando se tiene la convicción de lo justo de una causa, cuando se tiene fe en un ideal...
> — Yo imaginaba antes —lo interrumpe Néstor—que un revolucionario no tenía esos sentimientos , que fríamente...
> —No, Néstor —dice Ulises mientras gira de nuevo el timón— , nada en la vida se logra fríamente. Mucho menos puede lograrse una revolución, un proceso todo fuego, pasión, lucha. La frialdad es característica de aquel que trata de mantenerse al margen, de no participar. Pero ni eso se logra por mucho tiempo. Tarde o temprano hay que decidir, tomar posición. Tarde o temprano, cuando menos se espera, te vas envuelto en la vorágine de la lucha y casi decides sin darte cuenta, así, nada más. (1980: 97)

A number of Cuban critics have remarked upon this kind of explicit didacticism. Onelio Jorge Cardoso, for example, writes that this type of language is the antithesis of literature:

> No es literatura, no cumple la función de la literatura, la destruye y se destruye a sí mismo, puesto que no comunica la verdad que quiere decir. El lema debe sacarse del hombre, no decirlo la literatura. De Patria o Muerte como lema se puede escribir un cuento, con tal de que no se diga Patria o Muerte dentro del

> cuento, sino que como consecuencia de su lectura, el lector se diga en su corazón Patria o Muerte, Venceremos. (Quoted in Esther García 1967: 2).

Pequeño (1994) suggests that Cristóbal Pérez's inexperience as a writer accounts for the glaring discontinuities and inconsistencies, such as when it is mentioned that the police had prepared a 'simulacro de sabotaje en la planta' (1980: 108) and this fails to materialise. In another instance, Ulises, on reading a letter sent from the United States recognises it immediately as a spy document. He notes *ipso facto* that 'la letra y otros detalles del sobre eran los mismos que en algunos casos aparecían en la correspondencia con mensajes de escritura secreta' (1980: 43). Pequeño comments that this is too simplistic. Despite the fact that such things may be possible in reality, they seem incredible within this novel. In putting such errors down to inexperience Pequeño is perhaps being kind to Cristóbal Pérez because a reading of his second novel, *La ronda de los rubíes* (1973) shows that he is still prone to similar mistakes.

La ronda de los rubíes won the Concurso del Triunfo de la Revolución prize in 1973 and is one of the most successful Cuban detective stories of all time having gone through seven editions in Cuba and numerous editions in the former Soviet bloc.[3] Unlike *Explosión en Tallapiedra* it is not primarily a counter-espionage novel although it is revealed that the CIA is involved in the end. The story begins with the detective, Julio, being called to two elderly spinsters' house in the plush Vedado district of Havana to investigate the theft of some jewellery, among which is the eponymous and highly valuable ruby necklace. This symbolic artefact transpires to have been the focus around which a group of disaffected individuals have gathered in order to plot their escape from the island by using it to 'buy' a passage to the USA from a CIA spy. Towards the end therefore, the novel begins to resemble *Explosión en Tallapiedra* in that the plot

concentrates on trapping the spy and the remaining conspirators red-handed in the act of trying to escape.

The story is told consistently in the third person by an omniscient narrator so that the reader is at times given the point of view of the detective and at others that of the suspects. This way Cristóbal Pérez avoids some of the confusion which detracted from his previous book. However, there is still the problem that the narrative point of view switches position suddenly and inexplicably. On one occasion, after Julio has been to investigate one of the suspects, Arturo, a new passage begins with a third person account of Arturo's past life that gives details that could only be known by Arturo himself or a member of his family. Not until the end of the account are we informed that the text is a report that has been written by Julio, but how Julio came by the information is not explained. Arturo, a retired bank official, who is suspected because he had a high ranking position before the revolution, turns out to be a false suspect. But this attempt at a red-herring is undermined from the outset by the fact that the other suspects are so obvious. They are typically betrayed by their activities or by being in possession of an article of conspicuous consumption. For example, the CIA agent drives a large and shiny black car, Laura lights her cigarette with a silver lighter, the spinsters have a large house and retain the services of their maid, Teté.

It is Teté, in cahoots with her husband Pepe, who steals the necklace because she is envious of the spinsters' wealth and was privy to their plan to use it to pay for a passage out of the island. The plot is complicated by the fact that Pepe and his homosexual friend Luisito are killed for the necklace by the CIA agent from whom they were to purchase their escape but who had intended to double-cross them all along. The agent is finally captured trying to escape with Pepe's lover, Laura, who confesses the whole story to the other detective in the case, López. Finally, because of a

discrepancy between the testimony of Teté and the two spinsters, Julio is able to make them break down under questioning and confess their part in the conspiracy. However, the intrigue in the story is confined to the revelation of how these individuals are involved in the crime not who the real culprit is. We learn only just beyond halfway through the novel the nature of the conspiracy because Julio finds a message in Luisito's house which reads rather uncryptically:

> *Luis:*
> *No podemos vernos, la cosa no está buena. Guárdalas tú hasta que nos pongamos de acuerdo. El socio de la compañía ya llegó. Nos vamos el 10.*
>
> *Pepe*
> (1990: 79)

As 'the Company' is a well known nickname for the CIA, any astute reader would be able to immediately deduce from this note that the CIA is involved, that the plotters are planning to leave the island, and that the necklace is to be used to pay for it. Unfortunately it is not until two pages later that the detectives, while talking to one another, realise what 'la compañía' is:

> ¡Oye, López! — y Julio se le quedó mirando con una idea dándole vueltas en la cabeza.
> — ¿ Qué pasa?
> —El socio de la compañía, el tercer hombre que llegó, el que hemos dicho que iría con ellos, el día 10. ¿A qué te suena todo eso? Irse para dónde, chico?
> —La CIA.
> (1990: 81)

In capitalist detective fiction, as Slavoj Žižek (1991) points out, part of the art of the writer is to fool the reader into only being able to see one plausible explanation for the mystery when in fact there is another, real explanation, waiting to be pieced together by the detective hero. Here, Cristóbal Pérez has rather ludicrously produced the opposite effect, providing only one possible explanation and making sure that the reader would realise it long before the sleuths.

Later, in a manner similar to the way in which Ulises in *Explosión en Tallapiedra* recognised the hand of the CIA in a message, Julio is able to establish that the CIA agent must have killed Luisito because: 'las huellas del asesino son semejantes a las de un tipo de botas que usan algunos agentes de la CIA[...] la linterna que encontraron es de las que utilizan los agentes de la CIA' (1990: 89). It is implausible that the CIA would infiltrate such an obviously identifiable agent into Cuba. To make it worse, he is described throughout as 'un tipo rubio'. Such features in Cuba would be sufficient to make it obvious that this agent was a foreigner. This easy identification of the culprits not only detracts from the enjoyment of the novel as a mystery but also lessens its impact as a vehicle for propaganda. The lessons for the reader seem to consist of being beware of tall blond men because they are likely to be North American spies and of short homosexuals because they are likely to be traitors.

The subject of homosexuality will be discussed in Chapter Nine which examines the novel *Máscaras* by Leonardo Padura Fuentes, but it is worth noting here the implicit homophobia in *La ronda de los rubíes* which is also the source of the author's attempt to create comic relief. Julio finds out about Luisito, as he finds out about every character he investigates, by talking to the neighbours, who seem to spend a great deal of their time spying on each other. Indeed, so intrusive are these neighbours that it raises the question of how the robbery of the necklace could have taken place at all. In some cases, the neighbours are members of the local Comité por la Defensa de la Revolución but in this novel, Julio first talks to an old lady who lives in the same building as Luis and finds out that Luis is staying in a friend's house some blocks away. At this point Julio also discovers Luisito's homosexuality when he asks the neighbour if all the people in their building work. This in itself is a loaded question. As noted in Chapter 2, the Cuban revolutionary ideology has a particularly obligatory characteristic. Whether or not a

person works is a sign of their integration, since in the Cuba of this novel there was no unemployment or unemployment benefit.[4] If an individual did not work, he would have no income and unless he had savings he would be automatically suspected of being up to no good, especially if he lived well. As the state provided jobs for all, there was no excuse not to work. Choosing not to work meant not fulfilling a revolutionary duty.

> —¿Trabajan? — preguntó Julio.
> —Todos trabajan en esa casa, sí señor — respondió la mujer. Y fue explicando lo que conocía de cada uno de los miembros de la familia. Al llegar a Luis, hizo un gesto de desagrado con la boca.
> —¿Qué pasa con él? —preguntó Julio.
> —Es un mariquita — dijo la mujer.
> —¡Ah! — exclamó Julio—. ¿Y no trabaja?
> (1990: 59)

Julio is obliged to investigate further. He learns that Luis works as a waiter in a café but he declines to go there because he is afraid that by asking after Luisito he will be suspected of being homosexual. But merely asking for Luis in his neighbourhood is sufficient:

> Se puso de mal humor, puesto que cada vez que preguntaba por él, le costaba trabajo describirlo sin ponerse en una situación embarazosa. Cuando al fin le preguntó a un hombre que si lo conocía, y le dio la dirección del apartamento, la mirada que le echó lo hizo ponerse colorado. (1990: 60)

A member of the Communist Party lives next door to Luis's boyfriend, a sailor. This Party member expresses concern that his homosexual neighbour might be a bad moral example to his children. His views are extreme:

> Mire, eso no era un 'muchachito,' era una mujer histérica... Yo me desespero con una gente así, palcampo lo mandaría, a ver si trabajando duro... (1990: 61)

That a member of the Communist Party should be saying this in a book written in 1973 is interesting considering the fact that between 1965 and 1967 the Cuban authorities had done precisely what he suggests to thousands of homosexuals in the

infamous UMAP experiment.[5] It is also interesting to note that the writing of this novel took place following the 1971 Congreso de Educación y Cultura passed a ruling against the employment of homosexuals in educational or artistic professions. This aspect of the revolution, already explained at length in Chapter 3 will be studied further below in the discussion of Padura's book *Máscaras,* which, it would seem, alludes to *La ronda de los rubíes.* When Luisito is found murdered he is discovered in the Bosque del Almendares, exactly the same place where the homosexual victim in *Máscaras* is found. This suggests that Padura's very consciously sympathetic treatment of the homosexual issue might be in part to make amends for the obvious homophobia expressed in this and other Cuban detective novels.[6]

But if the description of Luis as a homosexual is distasteful, at least his character is well drawn. This novel shares with many Cuban novels the trait of having the villains much better described than the police. All we know about Julio is that he is afraid to be thought of as homosexual, plays squash, and smokes. His colleague, López, plays chess and the only conversation they have other than discussing the case, is when they rib each other about the relative merits of their chosen pastimes. There is an air of school-boy innocence about their relationship which is decidedly false. When Ulises (the counter-espionage agent from *Explosión en Tallapiedra*) whose favourite hobby is hunting, comes into the case, the three of them have the following forced interchange:

> —¡Caramba, Julio, cuánto tiempo sin verte! —saludó afectuosamente Ulises al recién llegado.
> —¡Estás igualito! —le respondió Julio—. ¿Qué? ¿Cuándo me invitas a una cacería de guineos? —le preguntó.
> —¡Ah! ¡Ya te contaré! Hace poco fui a una por Matanzas. ¿Y tú, sigues jugando squash?, ¿no? —le preguntó a su vez.
> —¡Claro! Hay que estar en forma.
> —Bueno, dejen los saludos para luego —intervino López jovialmente.
> —Sí, sí, como que tú eres el hombre de razonamiento por el ajedrez —ripostó Julio.

Todos rieron. (1990: 86-7)

These past times are of course symbolically macho (the hunter, the sportsman and the intellectual) and such simplistic characterisations are a serious weakness in the Cuban genre as a whole. According to Pequeño (1994: 18-19) police officials and other 'positive' characters are symbols rather than real personalities; they are deliberately chosen to be that way so that the common reader might identify with them and put themselves in their place. Nogueras (1982) explained that in his novel *El cuarto círculo* (1976), co-written with Guillermo Rodríguez Rivera, the only character that is not described in detail is the principal detective Héctor Román:

> [...] sólo se sabe su edad: unos 35 años en 1973. Sherlock Holmes es flaco...Poirot...tiene el aspecto de un sapo...Maigret es canoso...Pero Héctor Román es como cada quien lo quiera ver: incluso puedo decir que yo me le represento de pelo castaño y Guillermo de pelo negro. Queríamos ... que la gente se lo imaginara como quisiera. (1982: 36)

The question remains whether this strategy actually engages the reader. It is hard for anyone to identify with characters such as Julio, López and Ulises. Such characters, according to Pequeño, do not create the desired effect:

> [...] con un personaje indiferenciado y que carece del más mínimo calor humano, sencillamente porque ninguna persona se siente tentada a ponerse en el lugar de alguien que no comparte sus más elementales preocupaciones, emociones, defectos, etcetera. (1990: 18)

Pequeño suggests that ideology ought to be expressed through character development and that it should be possible for a revolutionary character to be fully rounded without the novel veering towards individualism. He comments on the fact that the almost universal choice of an omniscient third person narrator encourages stereotyping.

On occasions these superficial descriptions actually endow the Cuban policemen with attributes they are not supposed to have, that set them apart from the ordinary. For example, subteniente Armando Hernández, Rodolfo Pérez Valero's hero from *No es tiempo de ceremonias* (1974):

> En sus investigaciones trabajaba a veces por impulsos [...] y en esos casos nunca se había equivocado. Sus compañeros le decían que él dejaba llevar por corazonadas; pero, en el fondo, todos sabían que sus supuestos 'corazonadas' se basaban en realidad, en un profundo poder de observación, en su memoria casi fotográfica y en la aguda penetración sicolólogica que sabía hacer de cada sospechoso. (1974: 26)

Or Egoscue from Luis Rogelio Nogueras and Guillermo Rodríguez Rivera's, *El cuarto círculo*: (1976)

> Era buen tirador, y podía quebrar un ladrillo con un golpe de karate [...] era eficaz y preciso [...] su cerebro bien ordenado terminaba siempre por hallar una solución adecuada a cualquier problema[...] (1976: 122-3)

Neither of these are normal, everyday men. Being able to find a solution to *any* problem and *never* making a mistake are the qualities of superhuman heroes, and since these men have no peccadilloes or vices (apart from tobacco and an occasional unreformed comment about attractive women) they become repetitively one-dimensional.

Equally one-dimensional is the informant from the ranks of the Comités por la Defensa de la Revolución who, according to Pequeño:

> [...] ha sufrido un proceso de esquematización semejante: [...] en novela tras novela el lector ha sido asaltado por su imagen, campechana, amable, jocosa, siempre dispuesta a opinar y ofrecer una taza de café. (1994: 19)

An illustration of such a character is provided by Carlos Raúl Pérez in *Poker de ases* (1992). The '*cederista*' (member of the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution) Chencha is described thus:

> Chencha los esperaba con la puerta abierta. Era de mediana edad, alta, huesuda, pero con la alegría e inteligencia retratadas en los ojos...
> Se levantó, fue hacia la parte de la habitación que hacía de comedor, y de encima de la vitrina, tomó la postal y se la entregó a Oscar.
> — Mientras la examina, voy a colar un buchito de café.
> — No se molesta, compañera
> — No es molestia, de todas maneras tengo que colar porque Paco sí que no se va si no le doy café — sonrió y echó a andar hacia el interior. (1992: 178-80)

These ever vigilant *cederistas*, are often the key to resolving crimes and are capable of suddenly and uncannily contributing the most timely observations, often at the most difficult points in the narrative. Such lack of authenticity detracts from the overall aim of the novels: to serve as convincing vehicles evoking revolutionary reality.

Pequeño finds only two novels which overcome these broad criticisms of the Cuban genre, namely: *Y si muero mañana* (1978) by Luis Rogelio Nogueras and *Joy* (1982) by Daniel Chavarría. Leonardo Padura Fuentes, in an interview in 1992 explained that both these authors were already professional writers *before* turning to the detective genre and therefore brought a more literary approach to their novels. As we have already noted, Cristóbal Pérez, and other authors such Luis Adrián Betancourt were former policemen or had no previous literary training. However, it is significant that both these novels were written and published after the *quinquenio gris*, when publication policies were relaxed. In addition, neither of these novels is set entirely in Cuba itself. The principal action of Nogueras's novel takes place in the United States and a good part of Chavarría's also. Thus both authors carefully side-step the restraints resulting from setting the novels in the revolutionary society.

Both these novels succeed while at the same time including many of the faults noted in other novels. *Joy* and *Y si muero mañana* have implausibly exemplary heroes and include passages that are overtly didactic. However, the novels are able to keep the

reader's attention and establish suspense. This is achieved in three main ways. Firstly, as already noted, by siting much of the action outside Cuba so that a more tangible dystopia can be created as a background for the action. Secondly, both authors structure their novels in such a way that the story is not told in a linear fashion.

The impossibility of rendering a realistic continuity of events is, as Slavoj Žižek argues, the main problem confronted by the modern novel and the detective novel. (1991: 49). Tzvetan Todorov, in his *Typology of Detective Fiction* (1966) also remarks on the fact that detective fiction relies on the telling of two stories, the story of the murder and the story of how the detective resolves the mystery. The first is a narrative that takes place anterior to the main action of the novel. There is thus a clear referencing to the passage of time and a dislocation of linear events. As Žižek concludes, the end of the novel comes not when the culprit is revealed but when the detective pieces together the past events in a linear fashion. Although *Joy* and *Y si muero mañana* are espionage novels and not mystery stories and therefore differ in that they are not concerned with the unravelling a past event (a murder), nonetheless both contain sub-plots that involve displacements in time. They utilise techniques of flashbacks and incorporate embedded narratives which tell *another* story. In the case of *Joy* there is also an element of irony discussed below. In *Y si muero mañana* the embedded narrative is the personal history of the Cuban protagonist, Ricardo Villa Solana, and his thwarted love for his girlfriend Yolanda. This love story provides both a secondary narrative and, more importantly, the third ingredient which other Cuban detective narratives lack: an insight into his mind and personality.

The personal tragedy of Ricardo is not only that he dies for the revolution but also that he lost his love; in order to keep his cover as a double agent, he is forced to pretend to Yolanda that he is a traitor. By embedding this narrative into the action of the novel

in the form of first person monologues, Nogueras succeeds in providing an in-depth study of Ricardo's character which engages the reader. As Padura Fuentes notes in his analysis (1988) this makes the novel something more than a linear account of counter-revolutionary attack. It is concerned with the psychology of the hero:

> En la dimensión humana de su hero, Nogueras halla el clímax interno del relato, y nos entrega así un tratamiento sicológico de las individualidades poco común en nuestra narrativa por aquellos años. (1988: 83)

Characterisation is absolutely crucial because it is the most important feature of the modern novel. As Lukács discovered when comparing the difference between the hero of the Epic and the hero of a novel, the heroes of chivalric romances were invariably one-dimensional guided overwhelmingly by destiny and lacking entirely in 'interiority'. (1971: 56-68) This lack, he argues is due to the nature of the world in which they existed. The novel, on the other hand, is concerned with personal trauma because the modern world is contingent. The loss of belief in God has rendered the world unintelligible and the novel is therefore concerned with the idea of the lost soul searching for meaning. In pre-modern times, because a universally accepted explanation for the world existed in the realms of the gods, individual destiny and personal 'free will' were not in question. Hence Epic heroes were never lonely. They could be isolated perhaps, but not alone because they are the bearers of destinies for the entire community. Lukács notes, for example, how Odysseus, throughout his travails, is maintained by the knowledge that he is guided by the Gods. The real and the imaginary are therefore in accordance with one another. The similarity with the socialist detective hero is obvious and this begs the question that the novel is essentially a bourgeois form and it might not be possible for there to be a socialist novel at all. By contrast, the modern (post-enlightenment/bourgeois) world is characterised by the disassociation of

the real and the imaginary. The world of the mind is understood to be at odds with the physical world, the hero therefore must be a 'problematic individual'.

> The contingent world and the problematic individual are realities which mutually determine one another. If the individual is unproblematic, then his aims are given to him with immediate obviousness, and the realisation of the world constructed by these given aims may involve hindrances and difficulties but never any serious threat to his interior life. Such a threat arises only when the outside world is no longer adapted to the individual's ideas and the ideas become subjective facts -ideals- in his soul.(1971: 78)

In the case of Nogueras's hero, Ricardo, his interior life is at odds with his chosen path of dedicated self-sacrifice to the revolutionary cause. Thus, while he is in the process of infiltrating a counter-revolutionary Mafia organisation in order to discover the details of a planned terrorist attack on the mainland, Ricardo remembers the scenes of his romance and contemplates the sorrow of his deception. We learn that Ricardo and Yolanda are in love, they were childhood sweethearts separated when he left to fight in the Sierra. They meet again later only to discover they had both married. He did not love his wife and divorced her. Yolanda 'lost' her husband because he went to work for the United States. She is therefore a revolutionary who suffers greatly when Ricardo allows her to believe that he too is counter-revolutionary and is also leaving for the States.

At the end, the author reveals he is a friend of Yolanda's accompanying her to a commemorative service in Ricardo's honour one year after his death. Ricardo has been posthumously awarded a promotion for his services to the revolution. Thus Yolanda finally learns the truth. This love story, although undoubtedly melodramatic, produces a tension within the characters of Yolanda and Ricardo that makes them realistic personalities. This is why *Y si muero mañana* is a convincing novel despite its penchant

for the kind of cloying revolutionary sentimentality for which less successful novels can be criticised.

The author's dedication with its reference to Che Guevara's ill-fated Bolivia expedition sets a sincere tone:

> *A los que cayeron en Bolivia hace diez años;*
> *a todos aquellos camaradas que fueron a combatir bajo otros cielos y no regresaron,*
> *a los constructores de leyendas, cuyos ojos verán por nuestros ojos, el alba del día de la batalla final.* (1980: 6)

At the time of writing, Cuba was involved in the war in Angola which must have given added poignancy. The novel therefore meets, in some way, Gramsci's criteria of being organic. The reader appreciates that the author is entirely honest in his intentions of eulogising dead heroes. He achieves this by framing the novel with the dedication and a hand-written extract so that it appears as a facsimile of a letter written by a revolutionary activist:

> (...) Y si muero mañana, que sepan mis compañeros que he permanecido fiel al ideal de mi vida; que mis camaradas sepan que di mi sangre por la patria. Si muero mañana, será para que siga viva la esperanza de un hermoso porvenir. (1980: 169)

There is no indication that the letter is real although the impression left is that the novel is a fictionalised account of the heroism and sacrifice of a real agent. The epilogue is composed of a censored security service file on the case which relates how the security forces, using the information sent by the dying agent, intercepted and prevented a terrorist attack on the island.

The novel is also extremely didactic, containing such passages as the following in which Ricardo views New York from a skyscraper:

> Desde allí, New York parecía humana. El dolor, la lucha por la vida de aquel hormiguero que se movía incesantemente en las arterías de Manhattan, las abismales diferencias de clase y de razas desaparecían desde aquella altura. Sólo quedaba una gigantesca

> trama de estructuras de hormigón y acero que iba tejiéndose a lo largo de toda la Isla [...] Pero Ricardo había visto —tocado— el magma vivo que palpitaba allí abajo; había estado entre aquellos hombres y mujeres. Había visto mucho. Había vivido. Había tomado el pulso de aquel país , enfermo de cólera, altivez y miedo. (1980: 49)

Ricardo is contrasted with the inhabitants of the high-storey offices who do not see the class and race differences in the city. Ricardo has lived in the streets and therefore empathises with the lot of the New York masses. In an earlier scene, one of Ricardo's colleagues, Riquenes, looks down upon the masses of Havana from a similar vantage point. The contrast with Ricardo's perception of New York is striking and not unexpected:

> Riquenes volvió a fijar la vista en la calle L, diez pisos más abajo. Hombres, mujeres, niños que iban y venían al estudiar, del trabajo: la vida de todos los días: gentes que, a decir verdad, no pensaban en aquellos instantes en el peligro, sino en llegar temprano a alguna parte, en ser felices... (1980: 43).

In many respects therefore, *Y si muero mañana* includes obvious examples of Portuondo's *el teque*, but it succeeds because Nogueras has created a convincing protagonist whose desires conflict with his revolutionary conscience. Policemen such as those in Cristóbal Pérez's novels, could not be controversial, they could not have 'problems' with either the system or their personal lives. Nogueras cleverly avoids making Ricardo critical of the Cuban system but he does give Ricardo *another* life, one which is anterior to the main action of the novel and continues after it, with its resolution at the commemorative service, one year later. The poignancy of Ricardo's personal sacrifice adds to the power of his greater sacrifice, that of his life for the greater good. At the time of writing, during the 1970s, questioning of the system was impossible. Later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Leonardo Padura Fuentes managed to create a space for that possibility in his character Mario Conde, whose

'personal interior life' is a framing narrative in four sequential but separate novels of detection. These will be discussed in Section Three.

It is noteworthy that Padura Fuentes was an undergraduate student of Daniel Chavarría (b.1933), a Uruguayan who was a classics Professor at Havana University at the time he wrote *Joy*. Once a gold-prospector in the Amazonian forest, Chavarría escaped to Cuba in 1969 in a plane he hi-jacked in Colombia after the police discovered his links with a guerrilla movement. Chavarría's espionage fiction draws upon his own adventurous experiences. The first novel, *Joy,* won the MININT prize in 1977 and was published in 1982. *Joy* is a complex adventure novel based on a fictional attempt by the CIA to poison the Cuban citrus plantations through a genetically engineered virus infection. Nogueras, in reviewing *Joy*, differentiates Cuban espionage fiction from the capitalist genre by suggesting that it is not a mere copy of its counterpart and that it has other functions: those of expressing 'la polarización de las fuerzas clasistas en el mundo', to 'desemascarar el trabajo de diversión y terrorismo ideológicos que lleva a cabo la literatura burguesa' and 'denunciar los métodos inhumanos del imperialismo'(1982: 60-61). In defence of this argument, the evil plots of the CIA found in Cuban novels, if not based in real historical fact, are variations of real-life events. Nogueras's character, Ricardo, provides an example. Ron Ridenour in his book *Backfire: The CIA 's Biggest Burn* (1991) details the stories of 27 real-life double agents who infiltrated counter-revolutionary organisations and the CIA in exactly the same way as Ricardo, some of whom also became estranged from their loved ones because of their behaviour. Similarly the plot of *Joy,* resembles the 1976 attack that introduced swine vernacular disease and resulted in the destruction of 500,000 pigs on the island and incidents in the early 1970s in which phials of chemicals were dropped from balloons flown over remote provinces of the island. More recently, in 1997, the Cubans accused

the US of being the source of a plane which they claimed sprayed central Cuba with a particularly voracious plant-eating insect (Pearce 1982, and see appendix 1). Such real destabilisation attempts contrast with the fantasy of the Communists or megalomaniac crime bosses taking over the world, typical of the James Bond narrative.

However, *Joy* does work in the same way as James Bond novels in depicting a Manichean struggle between the forces of good and evil. As Umberto Eco observes in his essay on '007', Fleming 'sees the world made up of good and evil forces in conflict':

> [Fleming] seeks elementary oppositions; to personify primitive and universal forces, he has recourse to popular opinion. In a time of international tension, there are popular notions of 'wicked communism' just as there are unpunished Nazi criminals. Fleming uses them both in a sweeping, uncritical manner (1989: 133).

The same approach (capitalist/good; communist/evil) but with the roles reversed operates in the Cuban texts. Eco notes that in Fleming too, the identity of culprits is known from the beginning and they are even ironically delineated by their names, such as 'Oddjob', the Korean assassin. In *Joy,* Chavarría ironically names his chief CIA villain 'White' when, of course, he anything but what that description implies. White chooses, 'Joy' as the name of his plan because it is wife's favourite perfume and because the disease with which he intends to infect the citrus plantations is known as 'la tristeza':

> Cuando estaba en los preparativos del plan, recibió un día una carta de su mujer, a la sazón en San Francisco, y el papel perfumado le había sugerido de inmediato el charming contraste JOY-TRISTEZA. (1982: 126)

This irony is self-consciously self-reflexive in that Chavarría names his hero Fernando Alba: the 'new dawn' of a revolutionary future. Eco notes that whereas Fleming assures his readers in his prefaces that the events in his novels are absolutely

true, his Soviet villains are so 'improbably evil that it seems impossible to take them seriously'(1989, 133). Fleming, according to Eco, seems to be consciously writing for two types of reader, those who will take him at gospel truth and those with a sense of humour. The Cuban stories are normally written only for the former type of reader and the humorous irony characteristic of Fleming is almost absent. This may be because, as Eco argues, Fleming's choice of the Manichean structure is not on account of ideological reasons but because the author is cynically adopting it in order to construct an effective and popular narrative. In the case of his Cuban counterparts, however, the narrative structure is a result of ideological choice and this has a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of their novels as propaganda. As Simpson points out:

> [...] if Fleming's success is based on his ability to tap sentiments attached to universal symbols of good and evil, the Cuban authors seek instead to rename those symbols of good and evil and to raise reader consciousness rather than to endorse existing un- or sub-consciously informed attitudes (1990: 120)

Simpson adds that Cuban crime fiction may have the same two types of reader that Eco attributes to Fleming, but whereas the humorous reading is acknowledged in Bond (especially in the self-lampooning Bond films) it is definitely not acknowledged by the Cubans. Any satirical reading of the Cuban works would 'always be carried out at the expense of the text.' (Simpson 1990, 120). In other words, the Cuban authors are guilty of taking themselves too seriously. In this respect it would appear that Chavarría is an exception who undoubtedly is aware of his readers' sophistication, employing a similar irony to that of Fleming in his characterisations.

An appropriate example is the character of Bond himself when compared with his Cuban counterpart. Bond's sexuality is so overblown and his athleticism so incredible that the reader is invited not to take the novel seriously. While one is not supposed to take the Cuban espionage novel as anything other than an heroic epic, a reading of the

description of the police hero in *Joy* does have ironic potential. Bearing in mind that the Cuban police hero should not have 'superhuman powers', it would be hard to find a more unnatural hero than Chavarría's Major Fernando Alba :

> Su rutina gimnástica diaria era fuerte: veinticinco minutos de suiza, cuarenta tracciones de bíceps en suspensión de barra, cien cuclillas, cien abdominales con dos kilogramos de contrapeso en la nuca, cuarenta planchas; todo ello precedido de cinco minutos de calentamiento y seguido de cinco minutos de distensión. No era del otro mundo, pero le bastaba para gozar de una magnífica forma fisica. (1982: 47)

Alba is certainly 'larger than life'. He also dedicates himself to practising hours of karate and table tennis:

> "Sí, al ping pong", respondía molesto, cuando algún cultor extremista de las artes marciales se burlaba de lo que consideraba un pasatiempo inocuo y soso. A Alba le fastidiaba todo convencionalismo. Era un investigador nato. Un estudio acusioso lo había convencido de que el ping pong era el deporte más completo para la educación de reflejos rápidos [...] Alba jugaba un set con la izquierda y otro con la derecha... (1982: 47)

Alba's physical and mental fitness is as impressive as Bond's but unlike Bond he is not supposed to be a fantasy figure. Also, unlike Bond, the reader learns little about how Alba thinks or about his motives for being in the revolutionary secret service. This very noticeable lack contrasts with the freedom Chavarría permits himself when describing Alba's counterpart in the CIA:

> Jerry White, que en realidad se llamaba Jermiah White, era de origen puritano, como muchos hombres impuros de su país. Había nacido en Filadelfia, pero su familia por ambas ramas procedía de Nueva Inglaterra. En su niñez había pasado necesidades, pero desde muy joven había sabido batirse en la vida como un tigre. (1982: 123-4).

We learn that he was an informer and a strike breaker, but is also sexually inhibited:

> En el sentido amoroso siempre fue un verdadero puritano, un monógamo convencido. (1982, 124)

In the Second World War he fought for the USA, but secretly sympathises with the Nazis:

> La caída del Tercer Reich constituyó una victoria por la que él también había peleado y la celebró con sincera alegría ; pero no dejó de sentir, según sus propias palabras, "que había una gran dignidad en aquella caída" Le impresionó sobre todo, "la gallardía dramática, la solemne altanería de algunos de los reos de Nürenberg". Con el correr del tiempo, aquella simpatía se convertiría en devoción. (1982: 124)

Whereas Alba is described predominantly in terms of his physical attributes, the psychological features of the enemy are important. Alba is married, has children and enjoys an exemplary home life. He, too, is monogamous but not in the obsessive way of the 'puritan' White. Although Fleming's villains are 'improbably' evil, in Chavarría's novels they are all logically explained exemplars of 'imperialist' ideology whose psychology is ultimately revealed as the motive force for their diabolical activities. These characters have histories which extend beyond the time frame of the action of the novel and provide embedded narratives which add to the interest. The first chapter of *Joy,* for example, begins with the story of the other villain of the piece, the Cuban emigré, Felipe Carmona, a door to door salesman whose passage from Cuba, his participation in the invasion of the Bay of Pigs and his later recruitment into the CIA are described in great detail. These are incidental details to the main plot of the novel but create a credible character, in this case one whom the reader is supposed to hate, but nonetheless understand. He leaves Cuba because he finds his vocation as a salesman is no longer required and the new society conflicts with his ideology of individualism to the point that it becomes unbearable:

> Se sentía asfixiado. Cuba cambiaba de día en día. Las calles de La Habana ya no se dejaba seducir; ya no soltaban los billetes como antes. Sus extraordinarias capacidades de vendedor comenzaban a ser obsoletas en aquel mundo trastocado. Y luego, cuando recrudeció la chiveta aquella de los CDR, ya no pudo más. Que la

> vieja lo perdonara, pero Felipe ya no resistía aquello. Estaba decidido a irse, como fuera. Anunció a su madre que había presentado los papeles porque sabía que si no se marchaba iba a cometer alguna barbaridad; y si ella prefería irse con él.(1982: 21)

We are told that his mother preferred to die 'del disgusto'. Though undeniably odious, Felipe has 'interiority'.

This is not to say that the Cuban genre has lacked experimentation. Simpson (1990) discusses the wide range of approaches taken by authors such as Juan Angél Cardí and Arnaldo Correa but even these novelists, who experimented with structure, failed to create really viable characters. Take, for example, *Una vez más* (1980) by Berta Recio Tenorio, one of the few women who have ventured into the genre and which also won the MININT prize. Recio experiments by using five different narrators each with their own point of view. Unfortunately this produces a muddling lack of coherency because the choice of narrator at any one point seems to be entirely arbitrary. Recio confessed, in an interview with journalist Basilia Papastamatiu, that she had changed her mind about the focus of the novel after she began to write it:

> Creí, al principio, que iba a tener gran dificultad en el momento de referirme a las técnicas operativas del trabajo de inteligencia, pero luego pensé que hablar de las mismas no era algo fundamental, y puse el acento en las situaciones humanas. (1980: 3)

This perhaps explains why the denouement does not fall within the action of the novel itself but is inserted in the form of an official report. Recio adopts the technique, common in the Cuban genre, of inserting what are supposed to be official reports and extracts from files into the text. Thus some chapters are given titles such as 'Expediente No.110' or 'Informe 306'. In these reports elements of vital information carry the plot forward. The problem is that these and other bearers of crucial information appear too conveniently, such as the sudden introduction of the crucial witness Paul Mackintosh

when he is arrested on page 183 of the 203 page novel. Until this point the reader has never heard of the man, yet he provides information crucial to the resolution of the story. Recio's use of police 'reports' to carry the narrative detracts from characterisation. Bettina Lefevre's husband is only described in the arid third person accounts of reports. Catherine Davies in her description of this novel (1998: 127-9) also remarks on the stereotypical characters.

Given this limitation, it is perhaps surprising to find this technique so often employed by Cuban authors. Perhaps the use of reputed 'extracts' from official documents is thought to add to the verisimilitude. This is clearly the intention of Luis Rogelio Nogueras in his novel *Nosotros los sobrevivientes* (1982), which, based upon his screenplay of the film *Leyenda* (1981), reconstructs the life of Cuban double agent Ricardo Fanjull Casanova. There are two points of intrigue. The first centres on the question of what will happen to Ricardo, and the second on the results of an ongoing CIA investigation into his true loyalty. These two plots intertwine so that the book is composed of a series of extracts from documents, reports, transcriptions of telephone conversations and other recordings, pages from diaries, as well as recreations of episodes through an omnipresent narrator written in the third person. The novel constitutes a kind of file on Ricardo which even includes chapters that are facsimile reproductions of certain messages. According to Padura Fuentes in his review:

> [...] la característica definitoria de esta novela, excesivamente alargada, [es la] pletórica de informes y 'papelería', más descriptiva que narrativa y en dificultades para tocar la afectividad del lector. (1982: 28)

Nevertheless, Nogueras does manage to create one of the most complete 'heroes' in Cuban fiction. Ricardo Fanjull is a complex character who is somewhat greedy but at the same time heroic. He has a sense of his own fatal destiny and a feeling of guilt that

he has survived while his friends died fighting for the cause. There is an echo here of the character of Ricardo Vila Solana in *Y si muero mañana,* who suffers from the same heroic 'affliction'. Here, however, the ideological message is more explicit. It is taken from a poem by Roberto Fernández Retamar that prefaces a chapter in the novel:

> *Nosotros los sobrevivientes,*
> *¿Quién se murió por mí en la ergástula?*
> *¿Quién recibió la bala mía*
> *¿A quiénes debemos la sobrevida?*
> *La para mí en su corazón?*
> *¿Sobre qué muerto estoy yo vivo...?*
> (1981: 409)

This poem encapsulates the informing ideology of most of Cuba's detective stories, as discussed in Chapter 2, the sacrifice of the individual for the good of the collectivity.

The title of *Completo Camagüey* (1983), by Justo Vasco and Daniel Chavarría, which won the MININT prize in 1982, symbolically references the history of the revolution itself. The phrase 'completo Camagüey' means that something is full or finished and came into use after 1966. It refers not to the city of Camagüey, which is in the centre of Cuba, but to Avenida Camagüey in Central Havana where the police headquarters are situated. Justo Vasco in an interview in 1992 explained that during 1966 the authorities decided to close down the last of the surviving illegal bars, restaurants and gambling joints in the city. The police raided them all in one night, confiscating the owners' assets at the same time. These included all their cars which were all taken to Avenida Camagüey and parked there while they were being processed. By the end of the night there were so many cars in the Avenida that it became completely blocked:

> Entonces dijeron: "¿Oye chico has visto l'avenida Camagüey? ¡E'ta completo, e'ta totalmente completo Camagüey!" Desde entonces la frase lleva el sentido común de significar que la cosa esta acabado o totalmente cumplido porque desde aquella noche ya la revolución era completa (Interview with the author 1992).

In the novel, it is the CIA agent's obvious lack of awareness of the significance of this phrase that betrays him. This is noted by Angel Santiesteban in his 1983 dictionary of Cuban slang, *El habla popular cubana de hoy:*

> COMPLETO CAMAGÜEY m. adv. Cub. Por completo, totalmente.
> Es tal la frecuencia del uso de este modo adverbial que en una novela policíaca cubana un agente infiltrado en Cuba evidencia su procedencia foránea cuando se detecta que desconoce el significado de este modismo. (1985: 132)

Unfortunately, for all its linguistic innovation, this clue appears as an amazing coincidence because the detective does not realise its significance himself until quite by accident he reads an explanation of the history of the phrase some days *after* he overhears the agent. The novel suffers from this type of fortuitous circumstance; for example, the planned sabotage (to deposit coins infected by a deadly virus in the change on Havana's buses) is only thwarted by accident because the culprit is caught in a routine police check.

Completo Camagüey descends into the following kind of exasperating didacticism:

> La intimidad hace de los militares, compañeros. La necesidad de salvaguardar los intereses de la Patria Socialista, hace de los compañeros militares. Por eso uno nunca sabrá cuándo los tenientes tratan de tú a los capitanes. Hay que ser del oficio para saberlo. Y un verdadero profesional, jamás se equivoca en eso. Tutea o "estudia" oportunamente, según la ocasión. ¿Acaso el pueblo, las masas de Cuba, en la absoluta, en la total intimidad patriótica de las concentraciones, no tutea a Fidel? (1983: 144)

In sum, with only two exceptions, no Cuban revolutionary police novel entirely overcame the problem of creating a form in which, following Gramsci, the author's views spring organically from the text and the novel from society. They failed to create the 'viable world' Gramsci called for. The restraints imposed by the Cuban formula for the novel are too great to allow the authors the freedom to create such a world. But to be fair to the Cubans, their own critics became acutely aware of this failing towards the

end of the 1980s. For Pequeño, *Joy* and *Y si muero manaña* were partially successful, but other novels published during the 1980s were appreciably worse. He is scathing about the quality of the Cuban novel after 1979:

> [...] a partir de 1979 inicia un decenso cualitivo que el cuatrenio 1980-1983 convertirá en descalabro casí absoluto. (1994: 24)

According to Pequeño, novelists merely copied the methods of *La ronda de los rubíes* without improving upon them and the novels became littered with characters that 'speak but don't act'. The novels became repetitive, stale morality tales which above all ran the risk of predictability. Pequeño is not alone in the Cuban literary establishment in criticising the novels in this way. Desidero Navarro (1986) is also critical:

> La novela policial [cubana] ha adquirido rasgos que la asemejan al género de la fábula: los elementos del plano del sujeto asumen la función de ilustrar tesis o valoraciones; las enseñanzas resultan del constante entre dos actitudes, conductas o argumentaciones; los personajes no son figuras individualizadas, irrepitibles, sino simples portadores de ciertos rasgos típicos; y las formas básicas de manifestación de la ideología en la obra son la mencionada ilustración fabular y la declaración directa del autor o de su parte-parole o *raisonneur*. (1986: 60)

This state of affairs, according to Pequeño, was caused by four main factors. Discussed below, they build up a picture of Cuba lacking an adequate social atmosphere and cultural climate in which innovative and truly creative solutions could be achieved.

Firstly, Pequeño laments the indiscriminate publication of minor works. Almost twice as many novels were published between 1980 and 1983 than during the 1970s:

> Durante los ocho años que van de 1971 a 1978 se publicaron en Cuba 12 novelas policiales; sin embargo, entre 1980 and 1983, fue editada la friolera de 22 novelas con este sello; es decir, casi el doble en la mitad del tiempo...esa falta de rigor editorial, ese facilismo, otorgó el honor de la impresión a textos que nunca lo merecieron... y estimuló el descuido y la ausencia de verdadero trabajo creador entre muchos escritores policiales. (1994: 26)

Secondly, Pequeño blames the decline in quality on a lack of adequate criticism. Pequeño notes how hundreds of articles were devoted to the genre in the press but none actually assessed the value of the works published. In these uncritical readings

> Sólo se entendió con ánimo paternalista como la obligación de ser indulgentes, o sea, exaltar las virtudes e ignorar los errores, cuando lo verdaderamente constructivo habría sido el examen riguroso.(1994: 26)

Writing in 1981, Leonardo Padura Fuentes noted similarly:

> [...] se habla mucho de la novela policial cubana, de sus logros, de sus esperanzadoras perspectivas, de su aceptación por el público nacional. Pero, ¿se le ha hecho la crítica?, ¿se le ha analizado seria, consciente, rigurosa y desembozadamente? Las dos interrogantes por supuesto, reclaman una rotunda negación (1981: 24).

In December 1985, UNEAC, the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists, instituted a special subsection dedicated to the police novel headed by Rodolfo Pérez Valero. In 1986 this new association of Cuban crime writers organised the first international conference in Havana attracting authors mainly form the former Soviet bloc countries and the Spanish-speaking world. In an interview in 1992, Padura explained that due to this encounter Cuban authors realised their mistakes:

> Por la primera vez tuvieron información de qué cosas estaban sucediendo con la novela policíaca en lengua española tanto en España, como en México, como en Argentina, tres países fundamentales en el desarrollo de la novela policíaca [...] y se dieron cuenta que estaban literariamente muy distantes de que lo habían logrado estos autores. (Interview with the author 1992)

In the late eighties, Cuban authors began to reappraise their efforts but until that time they had laboured under the impression that what they were doing was worthwhile. According to Padura, such was the shock of the late awakening that some authors including Valero and Betancourt stopped writing for a while.

The third factor is the effect of censorship. A number of worthy novels were not published. The censorship of novels took place usually with the permission of the

authors who were asked on occasions to rewrite passages if they did not conform to what was required. Censorship was usually carried out by a reader from the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) who was concerned with nothing more than the reputation of the police. Questions of ideology were rarely, if ever, a bone of contention, principally because the Cuban authors were all sufficiently well-integrated into the revolution. However, interviews with two censored novelists reveal the extent to which realistic portrayals of policemen were impossible, at least until the collapse of the Soviet Union when a more pragmatic policy prevailed.

Daniel Chavarría was prevented from publishing his novel *Allá ellos* until 1991 although he completed it in 1980. The reason was because of the characterisation of the police. In an interview with Homero Campo published in the Mexican magazine *Proceso* in 1992 Chavarría explains why the novel (despite the fact that it centred upon a CIA plot to destabilise the revolution) was not considered worthy of publication:

> Yo sabía que *Allá ellos* era infinitamente superior a *Joy*. Busqué explicaciones... un funcionario de MININT me dijo: los personajes más atractivos de la novela son los negativos, los contrarrevolucionarios, estos robaban la escena a los personajes cubanos.
> Luego había otra cosas que el MININT no aceptaba. Por ejemplo: que por accidente dos adolescentes descubrieron que la contrainteligencia cubana usan comunicaciones con laser a un satelite de Estados Unidos. Otro que el espía— un personaje del fascismo español— suicidara en calabozo, en la presencia del custodio cubano. Eso no lo admitaban. Hubo que hacer el cambio y resultó una gran mentira. La novela terminó con un "happy ending", falso y puñetero. (Campo 1992: 44)

Justo Vasco, who co-authored *Primero muerto* (1983) with Daniel Chavarría, tells a similar story about this novel which was not published until three years after it was written:

> El oficial del Consejo Político del MININT, Rodríguez Menier, nos dijo que era inaceptable. Que dejaba mal parada a la policía revolucionaria de Cuba. En 1985 subió el general Fabián Escalante

> al Consejo Político y él con otras ideas destrabó la censura. Se publicaron entonces ésta y otras novelas. Un tiempo después fui llamado al MININT
> —¿Pero qué pasa?
> — Tranquílese, siéntese ¿Un café?
> — ¿Qué problema hay?
> — El oficial Rodríguez Menier acaba de desertar. En sus declaraciones confesó que desde 1961 era agente de CIA.
> "Imagínate" dice Justo, muerto de risa, "era el mismo que nos había censurado la novela. He tenido el honor de haber sido censurado por la CIA desde las filas del Ministerio del Interior de Cuba." (Campo 1992: 45).

Censorship resulted in self-censorship, Cuban authors only writing what they thought would be acceptable. This inevitably had consequences for the kind of stories produced. Chavarría adds:

> En aquel tiempo no había alternativa. Eran de alguna manera las reglas del juego o usted escribía así o no tenía que publicar. Eso es exactamente la autocensura cubana. Nadie le dice: esto no se puede escribir. No hay un departamento especializada en censura que diga este libro se publica, pero hay ciertas novelas que se publican y otras que no se publican. Está en el ambiente... Después de que usted escribe una novela de 7000 páginas, que le he llevado dos años escribirla, tiene miedo que termina en una gaveta. Entonces uno mismo introduce elementos de autocensura.(1992: 45)

Allá ellos was published in Cuba in 1991 but not before suffering substantial changes. In 1994, the original version of the novel appeared in Spain (Vitoria, Ikusager). Chavarría lays the blame for this squarely on the police bureaucrats in charge of protecting their image: '[...] se veían en blanco y negro. Eran gente que no tenía nociones de literatura y estaba ahí por razones políticas. Cosas que ocurren en Cuba' (Campo 1992:45). To a great extent the Ministry of Interior is to blame for the problems faced by the Cuban novel.

The fourth point that Pequeño makes underlines this fact. He states that the annual competition itself:

> [...] puso también su parte en la crisis, al premiar en el período varios libros de bien escasa calidad. (1994: 27)

This is not surprising when the rules of the contest explicitly call for works which eulogise the Ministry forces. For example, the convocation of the 1994 prize reads:

> Aquellas obras cuyo tiempo fabular sea el presente, deberán reflejar la labor de los combatientes del Ministerio del Interior y el enfrentamiento a las actividades diversionistas y contrarrevolucionarias. Las que refieran etapas anteriors de nuestra historia deberán reflejar la lucha patriótica y revolucionaria de nuestro pueblo en su largo proceso de liberación. (See the illustration on page 119)

Judges awarded prizes to works which fulfil the requirements but whose literary merits fell well short, and not to award prizes to other well-written novels whose treatment of their subjects did not meet with approval. This occurred in 1991 when Leonardo Padura Fuentes's first novel *Pasado perfecto* was denied the prize because it contained a scene in which the policeman slept with one of the suspects. One judge, Imeldo Álvarez, explained this in an interview in 1995:

> La novela de Padura realmente no es nada contrarrevolucionario pero se ha olvidado las reglas del juego. Sencillamente no lo aceptó porque en *Pasado perfecto* hay un policía que se acuesta con una mujer que tiene que investigar y sin decirlo. Bueno, en la novela la policía no se hace notarse su implicación. Con una frase solo pudiera salvar la novela, como si la policía decía a un superior qué había sucedido. En realidad ningún policía cubana puede comportarse así como en esa novela (Interview with the author, January 1996).

The judges, Álvarez, Noel Navarro, Juan Carlos Fernández, Marta Rojas, Jesús Hernández and Migdalia Morales, declared the main contest void, rather than give the prize to a work of inferior quality. But the event did have the result that Padura's novel acheived notoriety. When the novel was later published in Mexico, imported copies circulated which prompted the literary establishment to change its attitude. In the introduction to the Mexican edition (1991), Padura Fuentes's friend and novelist Paco

Ignacio Taibo II remarks that Padura Fuentes had been a indefatigable critic of the Cuban genre and had resorted to the typewriter in order to demonstrate the Cuban genre's failings by setting an example. Taibo II's words are worth quoting at length because they summarize the problems analysed above and explain Padura Fuentes's challenge to the Cuban artistic establishment:

> Un policía borracho, ex cornudo, pero dotado de la virtud de la tenacidad, y un funcionario corrupto, son personajes nuevos en la narrativa policíaca cubana que había abusado de héroes angelicales y agentes de la CIA medio bobos.
> Hace años, en medio de una discusión con colegas locales expresé mis dudas sobre la viabilidad de una literatura que no era capaz de describir los atardeceres habaneros y en la que los policías no meaban. Padura me entregó este manuscrito hace algunos meses diciendo:
> - Ahí tienes una novela con policías orinando.
> El reto era claro. (Introduction to *Pasado perfecto* 1991: 13)

As will be seen in the Chapters that follow, Padura's novels are substantially different from those which have been described here and mark a fundamental shift in the Cuban genre. At the time of writing these words, Taibo II could not have been aware that Padura would go on to achieve the success of having all his novels published in Cuba and outside the island. With hindsight it is possible to see that the publication of *Pasado perfecto* marked the beginning of a transformation in the Cuban genre. For Taibo II its publication served to 'reparar lo que considero es un terrible error de un grupo de jurados' in not giving Padura Fuentes the MININT prize. As Álvarez indicated, that would have been impossible under the rules to which they were working. This demonstrates that by 1991 the rules themselves were no longer viable. The Cold War was drawing to a close and the Cuban revolutionary establishment was forced to alter in order to accommodate itself to a new reality. The rest of this thesis is a discussion of how those changes are manifested in Padura Fuentes's four Mario Conde detective novels.

Notes

[1] For a description of Operation Mongoose and a chronology of the attacks see Franklin (1992: 47-48).
[2] See Göbler (1987:72-73) in which she describes how criminals are often rueful and express a desire to be reintegrated into society.
[3] The Cuban detective story magazine *Enigma (*April-June 1988: 5) reports that *La ronda del los rubíes* had up to that date sold 200,000 copies in Cuba alone.
[4] The period in which the novel is set is important: at the moment when the system became hard line. See Chapter 3.
[5] The story of UMAP (Unidades Militares de Ayuda a Producción) is described by Domínguez (1978: 357) thus:
'In November 1965, the army's high command, with the prime Minister's approval, formed groups called Military Units to Aid Production. (UMAP). These units would be filled by drafting social deviants, that is, everyone whose behaviour was not strictly in accordance with the public definition of good citizenship. The first UMAP draftees were treated so brutally that some of their officers were court martialed and convicted of torture, but the organization was soon brought under control by Ernesto Casillas, who headed the UMAP in its formative months.
'The UMAP functioned throughout the sugar harvests of 1965-66 and 1966-67, but it was not universally approved. When many intellectuals and university faculty were sent to the UMAP as alleged homosexuals, the Cuban National Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) protested to the Prime Minister. Although Castro had approved the establishment of the UMAP and at first spoke well of it, he agreed that the treatment of UMAP draftees was scandalous: the UMAP was disbanded after the 1967 harvest. This decision was resisted by the army high command, whose journal ran articles in four different issues in the spring of 1967 defending the UMAP's record. Castro's defeat of the military establishment in this case, even though he was himself a civic soldier, demonstrated his power and showed that there were limits to the potential expansion of the military.'
[6] Homophobia was still prevalent in novels being published in the 1990s. See for example, *Poker de ases* by Carlos Raúl Pérez, a retired Agricultural Technician (1994) in which he constructs a plot entirely around a drug dealer and his homosexual servant who infiltrates Cuba to recover four packets of marijuana they had hidden before the Revolution. When the homosexual poses as a military volunteer to gain access to a house where some of the drugs are hidden, he is suspected as a fake by one of the neighbours because 'es demasiado viejo y maricón para estar en esa unidad o cualquiera otra...' (1994: 21).

Section Three

The novels of Leonardo Padura Fuentes

Chapter 7

The crash of the 1990s and the challenge to modernity: How crime narrative changes to 'fit' the times

As Slavoj Žižek remarks in his discussion on the origins of the detective novel: 'The easiest way to detect changes in the so-called *Zeitgeist* is to pay careful attention to the moment when a certain artistic (literary etc.) form becomes "impossible"'(1991:48). This, according to Žižek, is what happened in the 1920s to the realist novel when it was overtaken by modernism. He goes on to argue that in the same period there was a similar shift of accent from the detective story to the form of the detective novel. This curious linkage between changes in the fictional narrative of an age and the real transformations in society itself, is described in much greater detail by the Marxist critic David Daiches in his book: *The Novel and the Modern World* (1960: 1-11). Daiches notes that all novelists must necessarily select from a plethora of events that make up human behaviour for the simple reason that it would be impossible to record everything their characters do, think or feel. If they select therefore, they must select upon a principle that must to a great extent be publicly shared, otherwise the work would lack relevance to the reader. Thus he argues, during the Victorian period there was a background of belief against which authors worked that shaped the nature of their individual choices about selection and significance and in a general sense determined the kind of novels that typified the era. However, with the advent of the new century and

the horrors of the First World War, this 'background of belief' changed and the modern novel came into being:

> The modern novel is born when that publicly shared principle of selection and significance is no longer felt to exist, can no longer be depended on. The reasons for this breakdown of the public background of belief are related to new ideas in ethics, psychology and many other matters as well as to social and economic factors. The relative stability of the Victorian world gave way to something much more confused and uncertain, and the shock to all established ideas provided by the First World War and the revelation of its horrors and futility helped to "carry alive into the heart by passion" (in Wordsworth's phrase) the sense of this breakdown. (1960: 5)

Daiches goes on to say that, of course, most ordinary people went on living their lives according to the traditional morality but that a literary 'sensitive *avant garde*' responded to the new feeling in the air. The new times provided a challenge for novelists. In this respect, I suggest that the advent of Leonardo Padura Fuentes's 'problematic' policeman character, Mario Conde, marks the realisation that the Cuban revolutionary *Zeitgeist* has changed. This chapter posits the idea that the political and social changes in Cuba and the world since the late 1980s has brought about a similar transformation in the background of shared belief within Cuban society and explores some of the ways in which Padura Fuentes's fiction is sensitive to them. Subsequent chapters explore the same idea to greater depth and extent by examining Padura Fuentes's novels more closely.

Following on from the discussion of Lukács in Chapter 6 above, the argument revolves around the *viability* of the Cuban detective genre and way in which it 'fits' or is appropriate to the society in which it is read. In the broadest sense, it is possible to draw a comparison, at least in terms of its effect, between the transformation in Cuban society in the period since 1989 and the kind of changes that were happening as Lukács describes them during the European reformation. In Chapter 2 we saw how the

power structure of revolutionary Cuba broadly corresponds to that which Foucault described as 'pastoral' pertaining to that of the mediaeval church. The period after 1971 in Cuba was a time when rigid Marxist-Leninism was being imposed, exemplified by the decisions taken at the Congress on Education and Culture of that year. Cuban society came under a monolithic Party control which was in turn directed by an unquestioned belief in the certainty of salvation through the application of the principles of historical materialism. The kind of environment that this created for art in general and literature in particular was one in which, to use Daiches's term, the background of belief prohibited any questioning of the revolution or its project. It resulted in a practice of selection and significance which produced a literature that eulogised revolutionary heroes, praised the 'heroic' revolution and damned its opponents. The Cuban police detective always 'got his man' and it was implicitly understood that in this Manichean battle, the revolutionary hero would be successful in his mission, even if he lost his life in the process. Thus destiny provided a moral victory and the heroic characters of detective or espionage stories led charmed lives, in the sense that the reader would always be sure that they would succeed in the end. In this crucial aspect therefore the Cuban genre in this period bears far more resemblance to the chivalric romance or the Epic with their blessed heroes than to the modern novel. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s it was impossible for a Cuban detective hero to have problems or failures because, like the heroes of the romance or the Epic, as Lukács pointed out, their problems were exterior to themselves. The heroes of Cuban revolutionary novels faced difficulties and challenges but did not have personal doubts. They could not be at odds with their surroundings. Their actions were guided by the highest ideals that could never be questioned. In other words, these heroes could not be differentiated from the socialist totality that surrounded them. In

this sense, the difficulties faced by writers were only superficially those of official censorship and the rules laid down by the MININT contest.

As we saw in Chapter 6, Simpson (1990) argues strongly that it was these rules and conventions which mitigated the ability of practitioners of the Cuban genre to produce successful suspense stories. However, she overlooks another fundamental factor that these novels share. In my view, these novels also seem unconvincing to us because they lack a vital ingredient. At base, the problem, as we noted in the previous chapter, is the hero's lack of interiority. This actually raises the doubt as to whether the texts produced in post-revolutionary Cuba should be categorised as novels in the strictest sense. According to Lukács, the hero who lacks interiority is appropriate to the Epic and not the novel. Thus, the realist novel in 1970s and 1980s Cuba was impossible to write and, as we have seen, only two authors, according to this view (Nogueras and Chavarría) achieved it. This was not the case in 1999 and the reason is very much to do with a changing Cuban society and its corresponding *Zeitgeist*. These changes began in the mid 1980s and reached their crisis in 1989 when the socialist 'order' of the former USSR and Eastern Europe began to crumble. The secure, confident world of Marxism-Leninism was profoundly challenged. The *Zeitgeist* shifted because it became impossible *not* to have doubts. Thus, conversely, it became possible for a fictional hero to have doubts. It is this capacity for interiority which Leonardo Padura Fuentes exploits to good effect and which forms the basis of the revolution in Cuban detective writing which his work represents.

In the following chapters we shall explore the ways in which Padura Fuentes's character, Lieutenant Mario Conde, is represented as an individual whose soul is at odds with his surroundings and how those surroundings have altered. In short, we shall be looking at the ways in which the world formerly depicted in Cuban detective novels as

homogenous and stable at home yet threatened from abroad, has now become heterogeneous, contingent and facing a threat of its own making rather than subversion from overseas. In post-Soviet Cuban society, the realist novel, with its tendency to irony has become at last relevant. At the same time, the heroic counter-espionage narrative has become strangely obsolete, although in reality the attacks upon Cuba have not ceased.[1] Padura Fuentes is able to write what is essentially a novel about the life of a policeman, who, incidentally, has cases to solve. The mysteries are therefore narratives embedded in the much larger story of his life, which he cannot properly understand. Thus Padura Fuentes is writing a fictional biography and it is the biographical form, according to Lukács (1971: 77), that is the true form of the novel because it focuses upon an individual life. This sets the novel apart from previous genres such as the Epic since the individual is too specific for representing the values of an entire community. Lukács argues that there is a dialectic at work in the novel in which the exterior world of ideals and the interior world of the individual inter-relate. It is the reader's identification with this personal dilemma that makes the novel so powerful. In the case of the Conde novels the focus upon his personal problems and his response to what is happening around him exemplify the crucial difference between this and previous Cuban detective fiction. This constitutes a fundamental shift in the genre.

I shall return to Lukács in Chapter 8. At this stage, it is worthwhile looking at another specific example of a genre shift in order to provide a clearer understanding of the issue. Essentially, Lukács is explaining the seventeenth-century genre shift from the Epic to the novel; Daiches and Žižek are both concerned with the shift that took place in the Western novel at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is logical to infer that genre shifts, if they are caused by societal changes, therefore happen at all times and in different mediums whenever sufficiently profound societal changes occur. One such shift

that took place in British television is explained by Alan Clarke in relation to the police serial. In his article, '"This is not the boy scouts": Television police series and definitions of law and order' (1986), Clarke describes the transition in the genre of the British police show during the early 1970s when the homely character, Dixon of Dock Green, was eclipsed by the altogether more vulgar and morally suspect Jack Regan of the popular action series *The Sweeney*. By drawing conclusions from the changes in post-war British society, Clarke explains how the police series changed because the concerns addressed in *Dixon of Dock Green* were no longer relevant to society as it developed in the 1970s. This was the result of a change in the attitude towards crime which itself came about because of economic and political circumstances: the return of a Conservative Government, the apparent breakdown of racial and social harmony evidenced by strikes, the rise of Enoch Powell and phenomena such as football hooliganism. In the 1960s, says Clarke, crime was thought to be a passing problem that would disappear as society grew more prosperous and returned to normal after the disruption of the war. In this period crime was to be tackled co-operatively, with the police as one part of a concerted effort.[2] However, in the late 1960s:

> [...] these attitudes were attacked from many sides. The crime rate did not return to 'normal' and periodically, as they were constructed, new 'crime waves' swept the country, with the popular press fanning the waves of concern. (1986: 223)

It was into this altogether more unstable and contingent world that rough, tough Jack Regan emerged. Clarke reminds us of how *Dixon of Dock Green* is remembered for the opening and closing monologues about the morality behind that night's story. These monologues spoke of a sense of community informing the concern about crime, represented as a neighbourly interest in something that could affect any member of the audience. The police/heroes were friendly types who lived among the community. The

genre shift which Clarke describes relates to the perceived character of the police. Regan of *The Sweeney*:

> [...] is not that [i.e. friendly] type of policeman. The spirit of cooperation and optimism which the shared values of *Dixon of Dock Green* suggest is replaced by a world weary cynicism [...] the policeman no longer enjoys a sense of belonging. (1986: 222)

We shall see below how the character of Padura Fuentes's Lieutenant Conde bears a strong resemblance to Jack Regan in this regard. Clarke quotes Regan from an episode of the series entitled 'Abduction' (transmitted 27 March 1975).

> I sometimes hate this bastard place. It's a bloody holiday camp for thieves and weirdos [...] all rubbish. You age prematurely trying to sort some of them out. Try to protect the public and all they do is call you 'fascist'. You nail a villain and some ponced-up, pinstriped, Hampstead barrister screws it up like an old fag packet on a point of procedure and then pops off for a game of squash and a glass of Madeira. ... he's taking home thirty grand a year and we can just about afford ten days in Eastbourne and a second hand car [...] No it is all bloody wrong my son. (Quoted in Clarke 1986: 222)

Clarke points out that such sentiments 'would not have been thinkable within the structure of *Dixon of Dock Green*' (1986: 222). Regan drinks, smokes and is divorced as well as having this ambiguous attitude towards the society he is supposed to serve.

All these characteristics correspond to Conde, including the one virtue they both possess, a tenacity and determination to catch criminals. They still get their man and thus essentially perform the task for which they are employed. In this regard neither Conde nor Regan are completely subversive. Their behaviour challenges traditional generic conventions but they also still provide a powerful moral. However, what makes them engaging is their problematic characters and the ambiguity of behaviour. Essentially, Conde and Regan are representative individuals who are coming to terms with the rapid and portentous changes going on around them. In the case of Conde these

are changes, which began in the mid-1980s and reached crisis proportions in the 1990s, need to be summarised before returning to discuss Padura Fuentes's work.

Cuba 1989-99

In 1989 a drugs scandal rocked the Cuban establishment.[3] After years of consistently denying any involvement in the trafficking of cocaine, Fidel Castro was forced to admit that a conspiracy involving top Ministry of the Interior officials had been using Cuba as a conduit for light aircraft smuggling drugs on behalf of the Medellín cartel in Colombia to the United States.

At a public trial held in June and July of that year, four men were condemned to death and nine others to extended prison terms for their part in the conspiracy. The two most prominent defendants were the first Division General, Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez and Antonio de la Guardia. Ochoa had been highly decorated for his part in the war in Angola and De la Guardia was a former bodyguard of Fidel Castro. In a case which was reported throughout the world, both men were executed for their part in the conspiracy.

From their confessions it transpired that they had used a secret code network set up by the Cuban state in order to allow planes to land in Cuba unchallenged by the air force. The code had been established to break the US embargo of the island. Because no trade between the US and Cuba is allowed, it is necessary for Cuba to literally smuggle vital goods into the island which are only available in the US Cuban front companies in the US, Mexico and Panama would purchase the goods and then fly them into Cuba in unmarked, civilian aircraft. The pilots of these planes used a secret code that identified them as having permission to enter Cuban airspace so they could land in secret airfields with impunity.

Ochoa and De la Guardia were in charge of the secret operation and they admitted in court to having been contacted by drug smugglers and to having agreed to allow them to use the secret codes. Planes would fly into Cuba, drop off the cocaine and the drugs would be transferred to high speed launches that would then carry the shipments to the US mainland. Ironically, as demonstrated in a documentary made for Britain's Channel Four television, it was the FBI who discovered the set up (Frontline Features, 1989). As early as July 1987, US spy satellites had tracked aircraft flying out of Colombia and landing in Cuba. The Cuban Government at first dismissed the charges as enemy propaganda, so that when the facts finally came to light two years later, the shame was multiplied.

Ochoa and De la Guardia's defence was that they were trying to gather foreign currency for the state through the illegal trade. However, investigations into their private lives proved that they had spent a great deal of the money on themselves, supporting lavish lifestyles including the purchase of luxury cars and several houses. Public outrage at their corruption was enormous and opinion polls conducted on June 22 1989 showed that 93 percent of the population thought they were guilty and 79 per cent agreed with the death penalty (*Case 1/1989*: 317-318).

The aftermath of the case produced an unprecedented crisis of confidence in the Cuban leadership. The effect of the scandal was made worse by the fact that these were not the only cases of corruption brought to light. As well as Ochoa, other high ranking officials were found to be corrupt. José Abrantes, for thirty years in charge of Castro's personal security, was sentenced to twenty years' jail in 1989 for abuse of power and misuse of currency (Eckstein 1994: 84). In 1987 there was the so-called 'Landy' case in which one of Fidel's favourites, Luis Orlando Domínguez, a former leader of the Young Communist organisation, the UJC, was also punished for embezzling foreign currency

(*Cuba International*, 1987: 3-4). In the same year, an Air Force Colonel, Rafael del Pino Díaz, defected by high-jacking an aeroplane and flying it to Miami. Díaz would later work for the propaganda radio station Radio Martí and accused Castro of being involved in the drug smuggling conspiracy.[4]

These political scandals did not occur in isolation. At the time these events unfolded, the revolution faced its most serious economic challenge. In October of 1989, the first popular uprisings in East Germany took place against the regime of Erich Höeneker and in Hungary, the Communist Party voted to disband itself (Macridis, 1992: 134-6). Very soon, the corruption scandals were subsumed under the political crisis of Soviet Communism and the economic catastrophe that ensued as Cuba's trade with the former COMECON countries collapsed. This crisis further exacerbated problems already in evidence in the Soviet Union and Cuba since 1985. [5]

In 1985 the Cuban government had embarked upon a programme of internal reform known as *Rectificación* in response to the kind of economic problems the Soviet Union was experiencing (Eckstein, 1994: 21-79). Whereas the Soviet Union under Gorbachev had opted for *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, a slackening of state monopoly control and an adoption of capitalist methods, Cuba had opted to deepen its ideological commitment to socialism. *Rectificación* was an attempt to solve the crisis of liquidity and low productivity inherent in the Soviet economic system by means that did not signify a retreat towards capitalism. However, *Rectificación,* by implicitly admitting that there had been errors, also admitted that the Soviet socialist system was fallible. By maintaining its commitment to socialism in 1989, when the whole COMECON system finally collapsed, Cuba became one of the last state repositories of Marxist-Leninism in the world.

In a matter of 18 months, the crisis in the Soviet Union produced a drop of 85 per cent in Cuba's trade, and a decline in GDP of 35 per cent (Bell Lara and Dello Buono, 1995: 1-5). The Cuban Government was forced to make extensive and intensive changes in the economy in order to survive the shock that was worsened by the increased US economic embargo.[6] In the short term, Cuba was forced to adopt a strategy which had been developed for wartime, putting into place a contingency plan known as 'The Special Period in a Time of Peace' under which a strict rationing of food, energy and transport was introduced. This created severe hardship for broad sections of the Cuban population and the outbreak of nutrition-related epidemics such as the neuropathy disease that affected 200,000 people in 1993 (Kirkpatrick, 1996: 1,491).

In the longer term, the Government adopted an economic strategy designed to incorporate Cuba into the world market economy. This has meant the acceptance of foreign private enterprise capital, the establishment of free markets in food and some goods, the establishment of self-employment as a legitimate economic activity, the loss of the guarantee of employment, and the legalisation of the US dollar as a tender for exchange within the country (Bell Lara, 1995: 64). In addition, the Government opted to boost tourism, resulting in a five fold increase in foreign visitors to the island between 1991 and 1996 (*Destino Cuba,* 1997).

The effects of these events has been to create a tremendous sense of insecurity and flux within Cuban society (McFadyen, 1995: 21). The economic crisis meant that for the first time since the revolution, the living standards of the population began to fall. Cubans were faced with the possibility that their system was not all it appeared to be.

It is precisely at the time these events unfolded that Leonardo Padura Fuentes started to write his tetralogy that comprises four novels set in each of the seasons of the momentous year of 1989, culminating in the portentous month of October (when the

events that led to the fall of the Berlin wall began). The period of the action is deliberately chosen and Padura Fuentes can obviously be read to some extent as a chronicler of the times in which he lived What I intend to illustrate is the way in which Padura Fuentes's writing can be read as a response to this crisis. By taking a modernist narrative typology, the detective genre, and shaping it anew within the Cuban context, Padura Fuentes is mimicking a process which, as Clarke, Lukács and Daiches have demonstrated, also occurred at crisis moments in other societies at other times.

The detective novel: Chronicle of social malaise

Of particular importance here is another such genre shift which took place during the depression era in the United States when Dashiell Hammett invented what became known as the hard-boiled detective novel. Hammett's 'revolution' is important for three reasons: firstly, it involved the crime novel; secondly, Hammett influenced Padura Fuentes who dedicated his last Conde novel *Paisaje de otoño* (1998) to the American writer and included a sub-plot about the search for a lost golden relic that is an obvious pastiche of the plot of *The Maltese Falcon;* and thirdly, Hammett's genre shift has in common with Padura's an implicit sensitivity to the crisis in the idea of modernity.

The notion of modernity is rooted in capitalist development. Ezra Pound's dictum: 'Make it new' exemplifies the very fabric of capitalist-consumerist industrial progress. The bourgeois revolution set about erecting a new society, better and more confident than the previous one. Its great advances in technology and the application of science to the solution of problems seemed to offer the promise of unstoppable advancement towards an earthly utopia. This confidence in humankind's ability to achieve coincided with a number of notable advances in physics, biology, medicine and the social sciences

principally in the work of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Albert Eisntein and Sigmund Freud. As Charles Jencks explained, these advances in thought were the starting points for what became known as modernism in the twentieth century (1996: 21-22). These thinkers offered the possibility that not only would we be able to understand our past but we would ultimately be able to control our destiny. In Jencks's words, with the addition of Nietzsche's philosophy, they crystallised 'into a calling, a named prophetic faith in the future' (1996: 21). Darwin, Marx and Freud sought human-centred explanations for what was formerly inexplicable, contingent, or accepted as being the 'work of God.' They substituted God with human observation, and 'discovered' a hitherto hidden pattern in the way things worked which deciphered the mystery of their particular field. Thus Darwin saw a pattern in nature that suggested that life evolved, Marx saw a pattern in history that suggested that human societies developed as a process and Freud discovered what he believed to be the hidden structure of the mind that ultimately disclosed the secrets of mental illness. These are all materialist solutions. As Jean François Lyotard (1984) has theorised, there is in these nineteenth and early twentieth-century discourses, an implicit faith in the ability of human progress, an essentially optimistic outlook founded in an assumption that there is a 'key' to understanding the universe. They are examples of what Lyotard has called *grands récits* which imply a faith in the ability of human science to perfect the world, to solve all problems. These *grands récits* characterise modernity. In Chapter 10 I shall return to this idea in greater detail. Suffice it here to say that Marxism, with its absolute and scientific 'faith' in the inevitability of the end of capitalism and the development of socialism, is perhaps the most modernist ideology of them all.

Cuba's 1959 revolution, as we have seen in Chapter 2, was the culmination of one and a half centuries of struggle, first against Spanish colonialism and then against US

economic imperialism. Cuba's revolution was profoundly nationalist centred upon an identity that was forged in the late nineteenth century at the height of bourgeois expansionism. It thus has a history contemporaneous with the period in which these modernist ideas reached fruition. It is my view that it is possible to read the revolution as a modernist act: out of the disorder and repression of the Batista dictatorship, the revolutionary Government erected a stable order which raised living standards and expectations. On the mundane level it built hospitals, schools, bridges; installed electricity and gave every household a television and refrigerator.[7] In doing so, it created the perception of the possibility of a utopian future. Indeed, because it came to adopt the ideology of Marxist historical materialism, it is certain that some sections of the Cuban community actually believed such a utopia was not only possible but inevitable.

Paradoxically, the Cuban socialist revolution has much in common with capitalism. Progress in terms of GDP is a measure that both systems use to illustrate success, and rising living standards are taken as indicators of development. Conversely therefore, if these figures show a recession, a crisis ensues. Economic crisis translates into political crisis. But whereas in western Liberal democracies such a crisis results in changes of executive government, in the Marxist systems of eastern Europe the crisis of confidence in the economy resulted in a terminal crisis of trust in the values and ideologies underpinning the political system. In the general collapse of the Soviet bloc Cuba is the exception in that its political structures have survived while its economy has undergone significant changes. The pertinent question for this thesis is in what ways, if at all, is the resulting instability and insecurity represented in works of detective fiction. As we have seen, detective fiction is particularly sensitive to such changes and is intimately connected to contemporary events.

As Todorov (1966) and Žižek (1991) have explained, from its inception the detective story has been bound up with the enactment of some kind of ordering. One might say it is modernist in the sense that it encompasses an attempt to clarify the nature of things. Classic detective stories attempt to arrive at a worldly connectedness. There is a material explanation for events and, in some exponents such as Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, the dispelling of supernatural explanations is a major concern. For example, pitted against the myth of the Hound of the Baskervilles, Sherlock Holmes applies a rational scientific logic. Ultimately, Holmes and his many counterparts are vehicles for making sense of the world.

The detective story always begins with an enigma and, usually, a murder, that is, a violent disruption of order. The detective enters and, through his/her investigation eventually restores the lost order by uncovering the mystery. To arrive at their conclusions, detectives read signs or clues, they interpret these signs in a variety of ways, usually finding an alternative meaning to the apparently most obvious. Their understanding offers an implicit guarantee that appearance and reality, though they may be disjointed now, can eventually be put together. Thus, the disjointing and the reassembling are two poles between which the detective narrative traverses.

During the twentieth century and after the cataclysm of the First World war, as David Daiches (1960), among others, has pointed out, authors such as D H Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, F. Scott FitzGerald and James Joyce were responsible for creating a modernist literature. They accepted the idea that the subjective viewer might see the objective world differently. The point of view of the protagonist became more important. This indicated there was an insecurity about reality, now represented as splintered, and less certainty that there was such a thing as reality at all. Thus for example, Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) tells a story from the point of view

of three protagonists, none of whom present an entirely reliable version of events. It is left up to the reader to decipher what happened but whatever conclusion the reader reaches cannot be definitive. Modernist novels share this apprehension about the complexity of the world and deal with it by trying to apply an order through art itself. In modernist novels there is a tendency therefore towards perfecting structure, patterning, repetition of symbols and signs, vocabulary and even grammatical structures. It could be said that in place of an ordered satisfactory world, the modernist novel presents instead a surrogate order (Daiches 1960). Like Marx, Darwin and Freud, therefore, modernist novels impose an order on the apparent contingent, chaotic nature of reality.

Puzzle novels, of which Agatha Christie was the most celebrated exponent, are the most reassuring in this respect. They are the most rigid in structure and predictable in form, and have the effect of neatly parcelling up experience into a consoling package. Jon Thompson in his study *Crime, Fiction and Empire* (1993) and Stefano Tani in *The Doomed Detective* (1984) have demonstrated the contrast between the comfortable, consoling nature of the fictional world in novels such as Christie's and the reality of bourgeois society in the 1930s, which felt itself threatened by the success of the Bolshevik revolution and traumatised by the effects of the Great Depression. But, as Thompson argues, if 'classic' detective fiction flourished as a response to these kinds of anxieties, another kind of response emerged during the depression which rejected this consoling image and presented an altogether more critical view of modernity. This is the detective fiction referred to as 'hard-boiled', invented by Dashiell Hammett and further developed by Raymond Chandler. As the premises of modernity are challenged, contemporary Cuban society has undergone a similar 'shock' to that which beset bourgeois society in the 1930s. The crisis in the revolution has resulted in a shift in the characteristics of detective fiction, and Padura Fuentes is the prime mover.

Chandler, in his essay *The Simple Art of Murder,* credits Dashiell Hammett with transforming the detective genre. Hammett, writes Chandler, gave murder,

> [...] back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse, and with the means at hand, not with hand-wrought duelling pistols, curare and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they were and made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes. (1988: 14-15)

Chandler's slightly sarcastic referencing to the clichéd features of 'classic' puzzle novels and their apparent lack of credible characters and dialogue are criticisms echoed by Leonardo Padura Fuentes in his essay on Cuban detective fiction, *Novela policial y novela de la revolución* (1988). Padura Fuentes quotes Chandler's essay. It is evident, writes Padura Fuentes, that the detective novel in Cuba:

> [...] se ha tipificado por la aceptación tácita y pasiva de los moldes del *detection* clásico, lo que las ha obligado, como bien dijera el viejo Chandler al referirse al devenir mundial del género, "a ocuparse sólo de lo que le interesa, limitándose a responder sus propias preguntas", una postura estética y conceptual preñada de facilisimo, abocada a la intranscendencia y, por supuesto, incapaz de prohijar la profundidad analítica que — a pesar de todo — puede conseguir la novelística de espionaje y crímenes. (1988: 70)

By calling for more profundity in Cuban detective literature, Padura Fuentes is in fact calling for its transformation towards Hammett's and Chandler's style. This is exactly what Padura Fuentes has done in his own fiction. How, then, has this been achieved?

Padura Fuentes and the new crime genre

At first glance, given the difficulties of transferring a style from its traditional setting in capitalist USA to socialist revolutionary Havana, this transformation might not seem easy. For example, Padura Fuentes cannot use a private detective as his hero but is

forced to have a state police lieutenant as the main protagonist. In addition, late 1980s Havana is a very different time and place to the kinds of urban nightmare cities that feature in Hammett's fiction. Apart from these obvious differences, there are others that prevent Padura Fuentes from copying the hard-boiled type entirely.

In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance,* John G. Cawelti points out that the hard-boiled novel differs from the classic novel of detection in two ways (1976: 143). Firstly, the drama of solution is subordinated to the detective hero's quest for and accomplishment of justice, and secondly, the intimidation and temptation of the hero takes the place of the elaborate development of the classical story in which suspicion falls on a variety of suspects in turn. It is evident that neither of these variances are incorporated into Padura Fuentes's novels. In the Conde series, each novel opens with a murder or a disappearance and roughly follows the same sequence as a classic puzzle novel whereby Conde and his sidekick detective, Manolo, question a number of suspects. Padura Fuentes always has at least one suspect who is plausibly the culprit and who later turns out to be innocent, thus the drama of solution still plays a significant part in producing tension in the novels. Furthermore, unlike the hard-boiled novels, which usually end with a violent confrontation between the detective and the villain with the villain usually dying at the hands of the detective hero, the resolution of Padura Fuentes's novels always ends with the arrest and peaceful apprehension of the criminal. This is a major difference since the hard-boiled novel is in part predicated upon the idea that society is generally corrupt, including the legal system. The detective hero has to mete out justice himself because the forces of the law cannot be trusted to do so. In revolutionary Cuba this scenario is still not possible, although Padura Fuentes does indicate a moral malaise in other ways. Given this constraint, there is significantly less violence in Padura Fuentes's novels. Unlike Hammett's, in which there seems to be a

murder on every page, Padura Fuentes's detective, Conde, is only ever faced with one murder to solve. And, since there is no organised crime in Cuba, there is no possibility of there being a traditional hard-boiled denouement in which the upper echelons of society are found to be bound up with gangsters. Padura Fuentes is certainly concerned with corruption in high places but, as will be shown below, it is significantly different from that which affects capitalist societies. Despite these differences in plot structure, it is my contention that Padura Fuentes has managed to fuse the puzzle novel elements with the hard-boiled variety in a number of profoundly significant ways which I will now explore.

Thompson (1993) argues that although Hammett was a modernist in his response to the post-First World War society he observed and criticised, he was nonetheless unorthodox, and his work combined a number of ideological elements that, taken together, define hard-boiled fiction. Chief among these are: an affection for individualism, a scepticism about human nature, a rejection of rationality, a use of the current vernacular and a naturalism according to which the environment seems to hold a deterministic power over the human protagonists. Padura Fuentes's fiction closely resembles Hammett's in these respects and in so doing challenges Cuban society as Hammett's challenged the US society of his time.

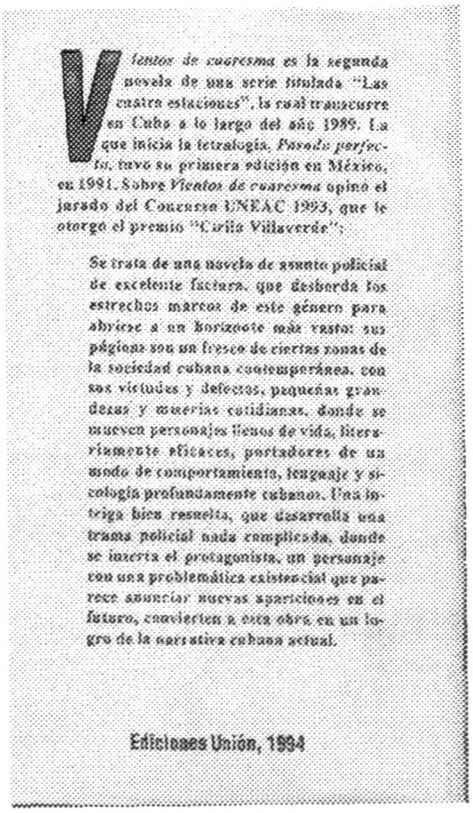
As already explained above, unlike the 'classic' authors such as Poe, Conan-Doyle and Christie, Hammett rejects the consolation of order in favour of a fiction that is altogether critical of modernity and in particular this is demonstrated by the shifting of the scene of the action from the country house to the city. As Cawelti remarks:

> When we step from the world of the classical detective formula into the milieu of the hard-boiled story, the vision of the city is almost reversed. Instead of the new Arabian nights, we find empty modernity, corruption and death. (1976: 141)

In focusing on the city, Hammett's vision is thus turned directly to the class struggle and on occasions to Communism itself, as implied by the title of his novel, *Red Harvest* (1929), in which gangsters are hired to control the incipient unionisation of a mid-western steel town called 'Personville' but pronounced, as Hammett's detective tells us in the first sentence, 'Poisonville'. Thus 'Personville' could be anywhere in urban USA and its urban blight encodes the corrupt and violent nature of social relations within it. The city is described as 'ugly' a word which has multiple connotations, meaning alternatively repellent, evil and dangerous:

> The city wasn't pretty. Most of its builders had gone in for gaudiness. Maybe they hadn't been successful at first. Since then the smelters whose brick stacks stuck up tall against a gloomy mountain had yellow-smoked everything into uniform ugliness. The result was an ugly city of forty thousand people, set in any ugly notch between two ugly mountains that had been dirtied up by mining. Spread over this was a grimy sky that looked as if it had come out of the smelters' stacks. (1982: 7)

The rest of the novel is an elaboration of the political corruption which has caused this dysfunctional landscape, the story of how 'Personville' became poisoned. In Padura Fuentes's novels we find a similar correlation between the environment and the nature of the society described in terms of the climate, pollution and decay. For example, *Vientos de cuaresma* (1994), the second novel in the series, but the first to be published in Cuba, opens with a description of the eponymous Spring winds that dry out the sugar cane, adversely affect the harvest, and are therefore traditionally seen as harbingers of ill-luck:



Vientos de cuaresma es la segunda novela de una serie titulada "Las cuatro estaciones", la cual transcurre en Cuba a lo largo del año 1989. La que inicia la tetralogía, *Pasado perfecto*, tuvo su primera edición en México, en 1991. Sobre *Vientos de cuaresma* opinó el jurado del Concurso UNEAC 1993, que le otorgó el premio "Cirilo Villaverde":

> Se trata de una novela de asunto policial de excelente factura, que desborda los estrechos marcos de este género para abrirse a un horizonte más vasto: sus páginas son un fresco de ciertas zonas de la sociedad cubana contemporánea, con sus virtudes y defectos, pequeñas grandezas y miserias cotidianas, donde se mueven personajes llenos de vida, literariamente eficaces, portadores de un modo de comportamiento, lenguaje y sicología profundamente cubanos. Una intriga bien resuelta, que desarrolla una trama policial nada complicada, donde se inserta el protagonista, un personaje con una problemática existencial que parece anunciar nuevas apariciones en el futuro, convierten a esta obra en un logro de la narrativa cubana actual.

Ediciones Unión, 1994

Cover of the Cuban edition of *Vientos de Cuaresma* published by Ediciones Unión 1994. This was the first Conde novel published in Cuba despite it being the second in the four-novel series. Note the design of the cover possibly depicting Hermes, the bringer of news.

> De pie, en el portal de su casa, Mario Conde observó los efectos del apocalíptico vendaval: las calles vacías, las puertas cerradas, los árboles vencidos, el barrio como asolado por una guerra eficáz y cruel. Entonces notó como empezaba a crecer dentro de él una ola previsible de sed y de melancolía también avivida por la brisa, e imaginó que tras las puertas selladas podían estar corriendo hurracanes de pasiones tan devastadoras como el viento callejero. (1993: 13)[8]

In the opening scene of *Máscaras* (1997) the heat of the summer delivers a similar atmosphere of doom:

> El calor es una plaga maligna que lo invade todo. El calor cae como un manto de seda roja, ajustable y compacto envolviendo los cuerpos, los árboles, las cosas, para inyectarles el veneno oscuro de la desesperación y la muerte más lenta y segura. Es un castigo sin apelaciones ni atenuantes, que parece dispuesto a devastar el universo visible, aunque su vórtice fatal debe haber caído sobre la ciudad hereje, sobre el barrio condenado.(1997: 13)

It is not violence which afflicts Padura Fuentes's poisoned landscape but the slow and corrosive illness of hypocrisy and secrecy, the 'dark poisons' of desperation and death that contaminate everything, even the Almendares river next to which the body is discovered:

> El Conde se acercó a la orilla y lamentó la agonía adelantada que vislumbró: estelas de petróleo, espumas acídas, animales reventados, desechos innombrales corrían con el agua lenta del Almendares, el único río verdadero de la ciudad. (1997: 95)

In Hammett's fiction, official politics have become indistinguishable from gangsterism. In Padura Fuentes's, while there can be no gangsterism, the upper echelons of Cuban society are often depicted as bourgeois and hence, in socialist terms, morally corrupt. In both, political leaders are seen to be untrustworthy. In Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1929), for example, it transpires that Senator Henry is responsible for the murder of his own son. In *Máscaras* exactly the same revelation is made about the diplomat Faustino Arayán. In *Pasado perfecto* (1991) a significant theme is predicated upon the wide difference between the public persona of Rafael Morín, the model

Communist official and his corrupt and selfish private life. In writing about Hammett, Steven Marcus notes:

> The respectability of respectable America is as much a fiction and a fraud as the phoney respectable society fabricated by criminals. (1975: xxiv)

After Hammett, Thompson notes, scepticism towards the representations of the powerful and their claim to respectability becomes a convention, what he calls the 'hard-boiled poetic' found in authors like Chandler, James M. Cain and Ross MacDonald among many others (1993: 136). Padura Fuentes brings this poetic to the Cuban post-revolutionary novel for the first time.

Like Hammett's detectives, Conde is a paradoxical character who suffers alienation from society on one level, but at the same time is closely identified and implicated in it. Conde, like Sam Spade, feels a duty to rectify the ills he sees around him, yet at the same time has an attraction to criminal life. Conde has a close friend, Candito 'El Rojo', who lives off the black market and sometimes informs for him and Conde even drinks at Candito's illegal bar. As Marcus points out in relation to Hammett, this attraction is not merely one of lifestyle but comes as a result of the realisation that the façade of respectability that legitimate society puts up is essentially a fiction. What is remarkable about Padura Fuentes is that he is able to adopt this poetic in Cuba today without causing controversy. While he was denied the Ministry of Interior prize in 1991 for *Pasado perfecto*, he has not attracted any greater criticism.[9] Padura Fuentes has realised that the 'revolution' Hammett carried out on the detective novel in depression hit USA is applicable today in post-Soviet Cuba. It is significant that the readership is now ready to accept that there is a 'façade' and this must be as a result of the scandals that occurred in real life and to which Padura Fuentes refers in choosing 'villains' like Morín and Arayán.

As Thompson points out, because of their awareness of the fraud and duplicity around them, Hammett's detectives cling to a personal code of behaviour (1993: 137). This focus on an individual code of honour is essential for the detective in order that he is not completely defeated by the forces of decay. Thus in *Máscaras* we see Conde wrestling with the realisation that almost everyone has a double identity; his friend, Fatty Contreras was embezzling money and Maruchi, his boss's secretary, was a spy for the investigators who have come into the station and even placed him under suspicion. (This question of false identity is dealt with in Chapter 9, which focuses on the novel *Máscaras*.) Conde retains a sense of his own integrity. He resembles the man in Chandler's famous essay who has to go down 'mean streets' but who is 'neither tarnished nor afraid':

> He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be to use a time weathered phrase, a man of honor—by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. (1988: 18)

The hard-boiled style is therefore characterised by the paradoxical situating of an honourable detective in a dishonourable world and the tension produced between them. On the one hand, there are the human qualities embodied in the detective's moral code while on the other there is an implicit view that his efforts are futile in the face of the overwhelming forces at work in society. In Padura Fuentes's novels, Conde is continually having to confront this dilemma and frequently questions his worth in the greater scheme of things. In *Pasado perfecto,* he sums up his personal code when he tells his ex-girlfriend, Tamara, that he became a cop 'porque no me gusta que los hijos de puta hagan cosas impunemente' to which she replies sardonically: 'Todo un código ético'(1995: 84). At the same time, however, Conde has a profound sense of alienation. In my view, Padura Fuentes is influenced greatly by Jean Paul Sartre and I argue in the

next chapter that a deep sense of Sartrean morality is at the heart of Conde's character. Certainly Conde does not have a Marxist outlook; what is missing from the list quoted above is (perhaps deliberately) a 'conciencia revolucionaria' which is not exactly the same as duty or responsibility and yet is very high on the list of motivations that traditionally drive Cuban detective characters. Conde only seems to be driven by a workmanlike devotion to doing his job well; his is not a political mission and rather than displaying a Marxist reassurance of the correctness of his profession, he even writes bewildering existential fiction himself, thus displaying a trait that Steven Marcus identified in Hammett as 'the ethical irrationality of existence, the ethical unintelligibility of the world' (1975, xvii). This bewilderment, argues Cawelti, is an intrinsic aspect of the hard-boiled detective's character :

> To put it more abstractly, he is a man who has accepted up to a point the naturalistic view of society and the universe and whose general attitude toward society and God resembles that alienation so often and fashionably described as the predicament of "modern man." (1976: 150)

Padura Fuentes's detective solves his crimes and in that he maintains a similarity with 'classic' puzzle novels, but along the way he leaves many other questions that remain unanswered. In *Máscaras* he even raises a question as to the value of solving the case, remarking to himself that finding the culprit will not bring back the dead:

> La muerte se había convertido entonces en un suceso social, más que en un drástico hecho biológico que ninguna ciencia exacta, médica, natural o sobrenatural podría ya revocar: importaba ahora sólo como delito, como posible castigo al transgresor de una ley, ya establecida desde la Biblia y el Talmud, y el Conde sabía que su misión en el mundo terminaría con la victoria pírrica de una acusación, necesaria y esperada, pero incapaz de reparar lo verdaderamente irreparable.(1997: 95)

It is this open ended ambivalence in Padura Fuentes's fiction and the blurring of the classical binary oppositions between the detective and the villain, good and evil, and

order and disorder, that makes it so closely resemble the hard-boiled genre. In *Pasado perfecto,* Conde's own dissolution, his heavy drinking and lack of stability in his private life, is contrasted deliberately with Morín's respectability, which is later found to be a complete masquerade. In *Vientos de cuaresma* a friqui boyfriend is cuckolded by the college principal who turns out to have been having an affair with the young schoolteacher half his age. In *Máscaras* the vilified character Marqués is redeemed through Conde's investigations while the seemingly exemplary Arayán is found to be the murderer and a fraud. Thus Padura Fuentes's vision contains a relativism which is at odds with the world-view in traditional Cuban detective stories in which the evil imperialists and their fellow travellers confront the revolutionary police.

Like the hard-boiled writers, therefore, Padura Fuentes is implicitly critical of the idea of civilisation, though in his case it is not bourgeois law and property but revolutionary socialist society that is his target. By creating villains who are high-ranking communists he is subverting the ideology prevalent in the Cuban canon that asserts an absolute distinction between the criminal (or counter-revolutionary) and the law-abiding (or revolutionary) citizen. As explained in Chapter 5, the early exponents and the founders of the revolutionary genre intended that their fiction should demonstrate the legality and justice of the socialist system. In their analysis, the fiction of the hard-boiled school betrayed the decadent and corrupt nature of capitalist society. Now, by applying the characteristics of this sub-genre to Cuban detective fiction, Padura Fuentes implies that Cuban society is similarly corrupt.

Padura Fuentes paints a picture of Cuban society riddled with class distinctions, something completely alien to the idea of a socialist project, but typical of the hard boiled novel. Hammett's fiction is acutely concerned with class distinctions that came sharply into focus during the depression era. While Cuban society is obviously different

in that it has significantly less private enterprise and only a tiny capitalist class, in Padura Fuentes's Havana there are nonetheless clear differences in living standards between the privileged and those who perform less prominent functions in society. These differences came into sharp focus in the late 1980s. As I noted above, the villains in Padura Fuentes's novels are high ranking officials who are notably well rewarded with opulent lifestyles described in detail. The lifestyles not only contrast sharply with Conde's squalid circumstances but are incongruous and unjustifiable in a socialist system. In *Máscaras*, he writes:

> Desde que el carro enfiló por la Séptima Avenida de Miramar, bajo el sol todavía benévolo de aquella mañana de agosto, el Conde sintió que se adentraba en otro mundo, de rostro más amable y mucho mejor lavado que el de la otra ciudad— la misma ciudad— que acababa de atraveser. (1997: 86)

This 'other world' of the revolutionary establishment is clearly defined. Arayán has a mansion in Miramar, which, in a dilapidated city 'de vidrios rotos' has all its window panes intact. He has two cars in the porch, one of them a new Toyota. He even has a black maid, which, as Conde remarks to himself, is a throwback to pre-revolutionary times.

Padura Fuentes's picture of Cuba as a class society mirroring capitalist society is most clearly drawn in *Vientos de cuaresma* where not the upper echelon of the establishment but the middle strata is described. In this novel, the mother of the murdered girl is a prominent TV presenter who lives in the middle class neighbourhood of Casino Deportivo. As Conde approaches the house he notices how the suburb has not changed despite the revolution, and at first he imagines that he likes the place:

> El Conde siempre había pensado que le gustaba aquel barrio: el Casino Deportivo había sido totalmente construido en los años 50 para una burguesía incapaz de llegar a fincas y piscinas, pero dispuesta a pagar el lujo de tener una habitación para cada hijo, un

> portal agradable y un garaje para el carro que no iba a faltar. La diáspora de la mayor parte de los moradores originarios y el paso de los años no habían conseguido, todavía, variar demasiado la fisonomía de aquel reparto[...] (1994: 50)

The differences between the area in pre- and post-revolutionary times are negligible:

> Las casas seguían pintadas, los jardines cuidados y los car-porch ocupados ahora por Ladas, Moskviches y Fiat Polacos de reciente adquisición, con sus cristales oscuros y excluyentes. La gente apenas caminaba por la calle y los que lo hacían andaban con la calma dada por la seguridad: en este reparto no hay ladrones, y todas las muchachas son lindas, casi pulcras, como las casas y los jardines, nadie tiene perros satos y las alcantarillas no se desbordan de mierda y otros efluvios coléricos. (1994: 50)

Conde recalls the times in his youth when he went to parties in this neighbourhood that did not end in fights as they did in his own barrio and he feels envious, especially when he enters the home of Caridad Delgado and finds it furnished expensively and the drinks cabinet stocked with whisky.

Afterwards, he asks Manolo, his sergeant, if he likes the barrio. Manolo explains that although it is pretty he could never live there because he is from the wrong class. He also describes an avaricious and competitive strata of Cuban society, very different from the kinds of people Che Guevara had hoped to create with his ideas of 'The New Man' :

> [...] ¿te imaginas a un desarrapado como yo, sin carro, ni perro de raza, ni beneficios, en un barrio asi? Mira, mira, todo el mundo tiene carro y casa linda: yo creo por eso se llama Casino Deportivo: aquí todo el mundo está en competencia. Ya me sé esas conversaciones: Vecina, ¿cuántas veces fuiste al extranjero este año? ¿Este año? Seis... Ah yo fui nada más que ocho, pero no traje muchas cosas: las cuatro gomas de carro, el arreo de cuero del maltés, ah, y el micro-wave que es una maravilla para la carne asada... ¿Y quién es más importante, tu marido que dirige una empresa o el mío que está trabajando con extranjeros?...
> —No me gusta tanto este reparto— admitió el Conde y escupió por la ventanilla del carro. (1994: 55-56)

Conde's decision that he no longer likes the 'barrio' comes with his realisation that the even though it is crime free and respectable, it is no less corrupt than his own barrio. Implicit in his description of the people of Casino Deportivo is a deep suspicion of human nature and a cynical hostility towards those who are 'successful' in terms of the Cuban social and economic system. This is perhaps one of the most curious similarities between Padura Fuentes's fiction and Hammett's.

Cawelti (1976) describes the tension between the alternative emotions of desire and revulsion towards the rich in the hard-boiled novels and explains that this is a characteristic identified by the psychologist David Riesman as the other-directed personality type. The other-directed personality is acutely sensitive to peer group pressure and the emphasis placed upon the individual to succeed. Thus the individual feels pressured to conform and because he succumbs to this pressure, begins to feel he has lost his inner integrity. He loses his sense of identity, which leads the character to develop a bitter cynicism and hostility towards others. Since he is acutely aware of the tension between his inner desires and behaviour, he feels that he has missed out in terms of the rewards and esteem that society bestows. To alleviate the conflict within himself he therefore projects his own sense of corruption and phoniness onto others, particularly those who have what he lacks, that is, success, wealth and, importantly, a beautiful woman. Since the successful have gained these things they must be more corrupt than he is, yet at the same time he admires them for their success. Cawelti argues that many American readers identify closely with this tension in the character of the detective. By working through these tensions and finally coming out 'uncorrupted' by his experience, by clinging to his own morality, the detective becomes a fantasy-hero for the reader who perhaps would not have the inner strength in similar circumstances.

The similarity between this character type and Conde are obvious. In *Pasado perfecto,* for example, we learn that Conde is acutely aware of his inability to achieve a place at university to study literature. He was disciplined in his youth for having written an ideologically unsuitable story and, as a result, was made aware of his own inadequacy because of his inability to resist the discipline imposed from above. He becomes a policeman but is left harbouring a deeply ambivalent view of the establishment and, in particular, of those who disciplined him, including Rafael Morín who married Tamara, the love of Conde's life. Thus Conde has been pressured into doing a job he did not really want to do, and has lost his beautiful girl-friend to Morín who has everything he lacks. By unmasking the 'truth' about such corrupt leaders in the Cuban system, Conde works through exactly the same emotions as the detective heroes of capitalist fiction. This has serious implications for the Cuban system if the readers identify with the character of Conde in the same way that Cawelti suggests their counterparts in the US identify with their hard-boiled heroes. It implies that there is little difference between the subjective experience of living in Cuba's socialist revolutionary society and capitalist US.

Evidently, while he has no pretensions to documentary truth, Padura Fuentes writes fiction that engages with and directly criticises contemporary Cuban society. The subversive nature of this fiction is made obvious in Conde's slang, wisecracks and vernacular speech. Formerly the commonly accepted rules of the Cuban genre precluded policeman from swearing. Invariably, in traditional Cuban revolutionary fiction, the villains are identified by their use of the *habanero* vernacular, whereas the police always talk in perfect Castilian. This is significant since one might normally expect socialist fiction to celebrate working class speech. In the Cuban detective genre, however, a working class accent is seen as evidence of a lack of education and that can

only mean the speaker is a delinquent (since only they would not have gone to school). Unlike his predecessors, Conde is much more connected with ordinary life. When he says 'no me gustan los maricones' he is asserting this connection. Indeed, his street fight with a colleague that lands him in trouble, his consorting with Candito, are overtly political actions in that they establish Conde's disdain for the 'norms' of revolutionary life. Conde's rather lonely, individualistic lifestyle (most unusually for a Cuban, he has no family) and his uncouth manners make him a marginal character. His character contrasts sharply with the generally refined personages he investigates.

Padura Fuentes's vision, like Hammett's, leads to a negative notion of rationality. In these mysteries the detective is not wholly preoccupied with solving the crime; there are many questions raised as to the wider social and political malaise. In *Pasado perfecto* the mystery involves Conde looking into his own and the revolution's past. In *Vientos de cuaresma* he is faced with the phenomenon of the 'friquis' and youth disillusion, in *Máscaras* Conde explores Cuba's treatment of gays and intellectuals, and in the final novel, *Paisaje de otoño*, the case involves the theme of exile. In all these stories therefore, the corpse is merely a signifier for a much wider field of meaning. Even though Conde finds the murderer, the implications of the crime extend far beyond the matter of a dead body or a CIA infiltration. If the classic English puzzle novel and the post-revolutionary Cuban novel share the function of attempting to exonerate society through the resolution of crime, Hammett's and Padura Fuentes's fiction suggest a wider corruption of society. Individuals may be exempt, but the social order stands condemned. To Conde, society seems unfathomable, a sham; nothing is what it seems and everyone is tainted in some way. Conde's statement at the end of *Pasado perfecto* that: 'ya no nos parecemos a nosotros mismos y nunca volveremos a ser los mismos' (1991:188) is an admission of the loss of revolutionary innocence. This

loss is an ineluctable fact of life, which is why Conde always retreats into an interior world at the end of the novels; he needs respite from a reality he finds so difficult to face and from which there is ultimately no escape.

In the final three chapters I shall examine further the Sartrean influence on Padura Fuentes's work by a reading of *Pasado perfecto,* make an assessment of the critique of sexual and political intolerance that is evident in the novel *Máscaras* and finally, with reference to *Vientos de cuaresma* and *Paisaje de otoño* examine the postmodernist tendencies that inform the Conde series.

Notes

[1] At the time of writing (1999), two Salvadorean mercenaries were convicted of planting a series of bombs in Havana hotels during the summer of 1997. See for example *Granma International Review* (Special Supplement March 1999) entitled 'Without any doubt, the CIA and FBI know where these terrorists are'. Nevertheless, as we noted in Chapter 6, Daniel Chavarría, the most accomplished exponent of the counter-espionage genre, has now stopped writing these novels and is working on other projects.

[2] In this regard, Cuban criminology of the 1970s was curiously similar. Borrowed from the Soviet Union, it viewed crime as a residual hangover from capitalism that would slowly diminish. Interestingly, in the late 1980s Cuban criminologists were returning to the view that this was not the case and that crime was endemic to socialist society as it was constructed. For example the American journalist Rod Ridenour interviewed the criminologist Fernando Barral in 1995 on this topic. (Unpublished manuscript in author's possession). At the time of writing, it is commonly accepted that Cuban crime is rising and new laws were drafted in February 1999 to address it. See for example *Granma Weekly Review* (March 10 1999).

[3] For a complete history of this scandal and a full transcript of the trial see *Case 1/1989: The End of the Cuban Connection* (1989).

[4] Díaz appears as a witness in a documentary: *Castro's Secret Fix,* Frontline Features, London 1991, broadcast in Britain by Channel 4 on June 14th 1991. The film alleges that the operation had approval from Castro who wanted to earn foreign currency to prop up the island's economy.

[5] Eckstein (1994) explains the problems in liquidity and production which beset the Cuban economy in the 1980s brought about by the inability of Cuba to service its external debt.

[6] In 1992 the so-called Torricelli Act was passed prohibiting trade between subsidiaries of US companies in third countries and Cuba and contained other measures which severely affected Cuba's international trade position. See Elena Díaz González 'The Quality of Life in Cuba's Special Period: Examining the Impact of US Policies' in Bell Lara and Dello Buono (1995), for a full examination of this law.

[7] A full explanation and statistical breakdown of Cuba's social and economic development from 1959 to 1995 was presented to the World Summit for Social Development, in Copenhagen 1995. See *Cuba National Report* (1995).

[8] The four novels in order of writing and sequence are *Pasado perfecto, Vientos de Cuaresma, Máscaras* and finally *Paisaje de otoño.* However the publication sequence has been complicated by the peculiar circumstances that a writer in Padura Fuentes's position encounters. *Pasado perfecto* was not published in Cuba until 1995 because in 1991, when it was entered for the MININT prize, it was rejected and thus failed to get a publication deal. Padura Fuentes sought publication abroad and was successful in obtaining publication by EDUG (Guadalajara, Mexico) in 1991. This complicated matters in the island

where due to the paper shortages there was no possibility of a publication until the economy improved. In 1993, *Vientos de cuaresma* won the UNEAC prize and was therefore published by Ediciones Unión in a limited edition the following year. Thus *Vientos de cuaresma* (1994) became the first Conde novel to be published inside Cuba. In 1997 *Máscaras* won the Café de Gijón award in Spain, and was published by Tusquets (Barcelona). Thus *Máscaras*, the third in the sequence, became the first Conde novel published in Spain and the second outside the island. Ediciones Unión published *Máscaras* in Cuba in the same year (1997). In 1998, Tusquets published the last in the series: *Paisaje de otoño* in Spain. At the time of writing (1999), an edition of *Paisaje de otoño* is expected by Unión in Cuba. Thus audiences outside of the island have had the opportunity to obtain copies of three of the novels (all except *Vientos de cuaresma)* and audiences inside Cuba (with the exception of Mexico)have also had three (all except *Paisaje de otoño*) but neither audience has received them in the order of sequence. Tusquets will eventually publish all four.

Chapter 8

Irony, paradox and temporality: Sartrean morality in *Pasado perfecto*

As explained in the Introduction, from its beginnings until the early 1950s, the detective novel was an ill-respected form of fiction. Although serious writers had made use of devices common to detective novels, the detective genre was not considered art. It was seen rather as a popular entertainment. However, as Stefano Tani (1984) notes, the intellectual response to detective fiction changed after the Second World War primarily due to the rising popularity of French existentialist philosophy:

> At a time when there was practical value [...] in the belief that a man is free to define or redefine himself at any moment (assert his 'essence'), that is, when he might become whatever he chooses or needs to become in an inherently absurd universe- the private detective.... suddenly became the intellectual's hero: a creature capable of dealing efficiently with a disorderly and dangerous world. (Tani 1984: xi)

Tani notes that Jean Paul Sartre fixed on Chandler's Philip Marlowe as the 'existential hero'. The hard-boiled detective thus became an idealised figure, representative of the individual's struggle to assert himself in the increasingly encroaching bureaucracy fostered by state power in the Cold War world. Thus the fiction of Chandler and Hammett rose to prominence in intellectual circles in the 1950s. They both became literary figures and by the early 1960s scholars were studying detective fiction as an important cultural form. The mechanics of detective story writing were employed as a platform or formula for a more literary fiction, exemplified by the work of Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco. Borges' *Ficciones* (1944), for example, and Eco's *Name of the Rose* (1980) are salient examples of fictions that

use the conventions of the genre to make connections between the investigation of a crime and the literary and philosophical investigation into the enigma of existence.

This self conscious approach to detective fiction has resulted in novels no longer being considered as stories in themselves but as having deeper and deliberately intended messages. As with the detective novels of Manuel Vazquéz Montalban in Barcelona, or Walter Moseley in Los Angeles, these are novels of social comment, set in an easily identifiable society, that are made relevant by their direct referencing to the real world. These novels share with the fiction of Hammett and Chandler the creation of a central problematised figure of the detective. In common with these authors, Leonardo Padura Fuentes makes no secret to the reader that he is writing a fiction that directly relates to reality and should be understood as such. His parodic disclaimer at the beginning of the first novel in the Conde series, *Pasado perfecto,* warns:

> Los hechos narrados en esta novela no son reales, aunque pudieron serlo, como lo ha demostrado la misma realidad.
> Cualquier semejanza con hechos y personas reales, es pues, semejanza y una obstinación de la realidad.
> Nadie, por tanto, debe sentirse aludido por la novela. Nadie tampoco debe sentirse excluido de ella, si de alguna forma lo alude. (1995: 9)

The novel is therefore intentionally realist in the sense that the events in the novel are not real, but might have been. No one is alluded to, but anyone might be because reality has demonstrated it to be so. The tone is ironic, the statement paradoxical, and the message moral. If the cap fits, he suggests, then you should wear it.

In interviews Padura Fuentes has consistently stressed his aim is to innovate. In one such interview given to the Netherlands based *Cuban Review* (September 1998), he said his books:

> [...] give a different image than the literature written in Cuba. They are critical views of our reality, totally different from those

> patented as the only ones possible for Cuban writers: those of political and ideological reaffirmation. (González Bello 1998: 4)

His break with the past, is largely to do with the character of the detective, Mario Conde, who he describes as:

> [...] a bitter type, sceptical, a drunk, without expectations for the future; who doesn't want to be a policeman, but a writer, and who was very useful to me because everything in the novel is seen through his eyes, from his experience, *his disenchantment*. (González Bello 1998: 4: italics in original)

Thus, Padura Fuentes self-consciously wrote a novel of protest and used the detective genre as a vehicle for his interpretation of Cuban society. He regards the Conde novels as 'fake crime novels' (González Bello 1998: 4) in which:

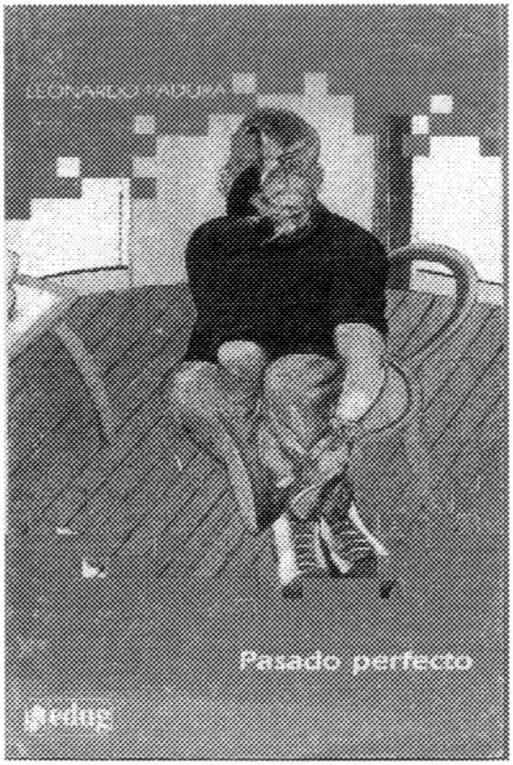
> [...] a police story is told, a structure that is very close to this genre, but that constantly violates its precepts and reflects on issues that usually escape 'the detective story'. (González Bello 1998: 4)

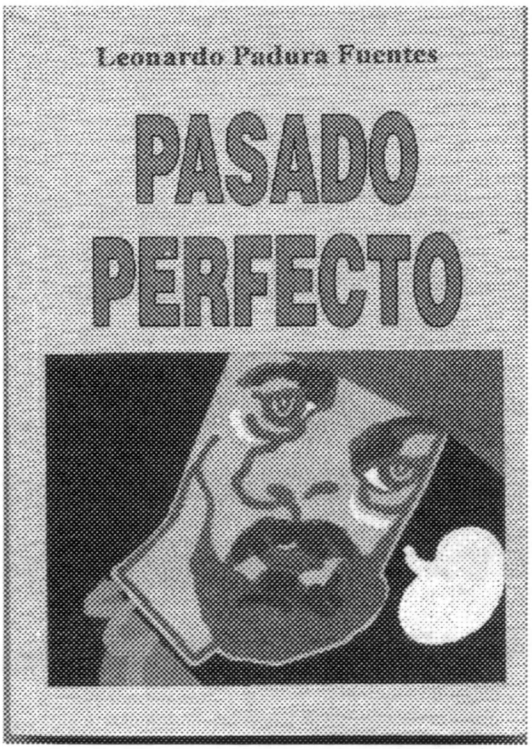
As we shall see, the *motif* of pretence runs through the entire series of novels. But what is clear from this interview is that Padura Fuentes is primarily concerned with a moral view of the world which, by its nature, is necessarily a subjective view, and he has chosen to express it through the protagonist of his stories. In this way, Padura Fuentes has fulfilled two of the preconditions which Lukács argued were necessary in order to write a modern novel: interiority and irony. In Mario Conde, as we observed in Chapter 7, the protagonist is ill at ease with his surroundings and suffers a 'disenchantment'.

Although the novels are written in the third person singular, it is clear that Conde himself is narrating since the reader is posited inside his mind from the start. Padura Fuentes makes good use of the Flaubertian free-indirect style, coupled with a keen sense of irony. *Pasado perfecto* opens with the line: 'No necesitó pensarlo para comprender que lo más difícil sería abrir los ojos.' (1995:11) This line is heavy with meaning. On the one hand it is a self consciously ironic reference to the fact that Conde is a detective

whose job is supposed to be about *looking* for clues. As Carlo Ginsburg has pointed out, the science of detection is based upon the paradigm of observation, of finding the inconsistent, idiosyncratic detail amid the mass of the ordinary (1990: 252-276). To be a good detective one has to use one's eyes; in this scene, the eyes belong to a drunken cop with a hangover. Thus, from the very first words of the novel, the Cuban reader is confronted with an unfamiliar character. It is hardly the most auspicious introduction for a detective not to even wish to open his eyes.

The irony is succinctly expressed in the title: *Pasado perfecto*. Its most obvious reference is to the perfect past of Rafael Morín, the high Communist official and villain whose life does appear perfect until the detective digs into it. *Pasado perfecto* also refers to the author's intentions. It expresses his view that if in the past Cuban police characters were perfect, Conde is not. But 'Past perfect' is also a play on the name of a grammatical tense. In Spanish there is no such tense, although a perfect tense is used to describe actions that have finished within an existing time frame (the *present* perfect tense). The suggestion is that what is described as the present in Cuba is anything but perfect and, since there is no *past perfect* tense, the title implies that the novel is about an invented world. There is therefore an implicit referencing in the title to a division between reality (what is) and reality as it is perceived to be, as it is chosen to be perceived. As we have noted in Chapter 7, this allusion is by no means insignificant because the year in which the novel is set is 1989, a watershed for Cuba. The title also





Above: The 1991 edition of *Pasado Perfecto* by EDUG (Ediciones Universidad de Guadalajara), Mexico. Below: The 1995 Edicones Unión edition in Cuba. Note the figures have ambivalent faces. In the EDUG edition, a painting by Francis Bacon is used, the face is a mutilated mask. In the Cuban edition, the character is two-faced and the speech bubble is empty, perhaps signifying a lack of answers.

ironically refers to the past before the collapse of the Soviet Union. A 'perfect' past is contrasted to the commonly accepted 'imperfect' present, and is then shown to be not so 'perfect' after all (suggesting that the present may not be so 'imperfect' after all). Conde's difficulties in opening his eyes can be read as allegorical. His difficulty refers to a national difficulty in facing up to reality. Later in the novel, Conde recounts a scene from his childhood in which he and his friends listen to The Beatles' song 'Strawberry Fields' for the first time. The songs of The Beatles and other Western pop groups were banned for a time in Cuba and it is clear that the boys are listening to a bootleg version (See Chapter 3). The moment had a profound effect on the young Conde, which now, in his recollection of it, signifies a time of lost innocence:

> Su canción preferida siempre fue 'Strawberry Fields' [...] no sabía por qué: quería negarse que aquella melodía era la bandera de sus nostalgias por un pasado donde todo fue perfecto y simple, y aunque ya sabía lo que significaba la letra, prefería repetirla sin conciencia [...] (1995: 78)

The 'perfect' past referred to here is that of childhood, innocence prior to the acquisition of knowledge or conscience. Now Conde knows what the words mean, but he would prefer *not* to know. His tragedy is that he cannot return to that lost time. The words of the song (not included in the novel) acquire a special significance in this context:

> Living is easy *with eyes closed,*
> misunderstanding all you see [...]
> (my italics)

Conde is a reluctant hero and does not wish to see. In realising this, Conde is also tragically alone; he is a Hamlet figure, a Segismundo, as hinted in the opening scene when he evokes Shakespeare's character:

> Dormir, tal vez soñar, se dijo, recuperando la frase machacona que lo acompañó cinco horas antes, cuando cayó en la cama, mientras respiraba el aroma profundo y oscuro de su soledad. (1995: 11)

This repetitive inter-textual referencing clearly signals a literary text; this is not merely a story about a murder and its resolution. The character Conde is cast in the classical mould of the tragic hero who faces a confusing world and comes to terms with his past:

> ¿Qué habías hecho con tu vida, Mario Conde?, se preguntó como cada día, y como cada día quiso darle mucha atrás a la máquina del tiempo y uno desfacer sus propios entuertos, sus engaños y excesos, sus iras y sus odios, desnudarse de existencia equivocada y encontrar el punto preciso donde pudiera empezar de nuevo. (1995: 52)

Later in the series, *Máscaras* (1997), Conde again contemplates returning to the past and asks himself whether it would be possible to 'volver atrás y desfacer entuertos y errores y equivocaciones' (1997: 233). This is an obvious reference to Don Quijote de la Mancha who, Cervantes tells us at the beginning of Chapter II:

> [...] no quiso aguardar más tiempo a poner en efecto su pensamiento, apretándole a ello la falta que él pensaba que hacia en el mundo su tardanza, según eran los agravios que pensaba deshacer, tuertos que enderezar, sinrazones que enmendar, y abusos que mejorar, y deudas que satisfacer. (1968: 41)[1]

Conde is an idealist, a Quixotic knight errant in a tarnished, often grotesque society. For Lukács, *Don Quijote* was the 'first great novel of world literature' because its hero was the first to display the traits of the modern dilemma. As we noted in the previous chapter, this dilemma is bound up with the transformation of the times in which the novel was written. According to Lukács *Don Quijote*:

> [...] stands at the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world; when man became lonely and could find meaning and substance only in his soul, whose home is nowhere; when the world, released from its paradoxical anchorage in a beyond that is truly present, was abandoned to its imminent meaninglessness...(1962: 103)

The societal change in Cuba during the 1990s and the corresponding crisis of belief is similarly disconcerting. For Lukács the Spain of Cervantes was a 'period of demons let loose, a period of great confusion of values in the midst of an as yet unchanged value system' (1962:104). Conde's values are egalitarian and based in honesty but he is faced with a world in which those values are no longer recognised.

The Havana in which the action takes place, as described through the eyes of Conde, is far from the socialist ideal. It is an absurd place in which the characters are no longer able to make sense of their surroundings. Conde's colleague Captain Jorrín shares his desperation:

> Ya son casi treinta años en esta lucha y creo que no puedo más, que no puedo más - repitió y bajó la cabeza- ¿Tú sabes lo que estoy investigando ahora? La muerte de un niño de trece años, teniente. Un niño brillante, ¿sabes? Se estaba preparando para competir en una olimpiada latinoamericana de matemáticas. ¿Te imaginas? Lo mataron ayer por la mañana en la esquina de su casa para robarle la bicicleta. Lo mataron a golpes más de una persona. Llegó muerto al hospital, le habían fracturado el cráneo, los dos brazos, varias costillas y no sé cuantas cosas más.[...] ¿Qué cosa es esto Conde? ¿Cómo es posible tanta violencia? (1995: 59-60)

In the Havana of Mario Conde the lifts never work and everything is imbued with an air of depressive nostalgia for the past. Added to this sense of threat is one of ruination.

> El Conde miró con una nostalgia que ya resultaba demasiado conocida la Calzada del barrio, los latones de basura en erupción, los papeles de las pizzas de urgencia arrastrados por el viento, el solar donde había aprendido a jugar pelota convertido en depósito de lo inservible que generaba el taller de mecánica de la esquina. ¿Dónde se aprende ahora a jugar pelota? [...] vio el perro muerto, con la cabeza aplastada por el auto, que se pudría junto al conten y pensó que siempre veía lo peor.(1995: 15)

The reader is constantly reminded of the passing of time. Lukács discusses time with reference to the development of the modern novel, in particular *Don Quijote,* which, makes plain that even attitudes considered eternal lose meaning when their time is past: 'Don Quijote is the first great battle of interiority against the prosaic vulgarity of

outward life' (1962: 104). This is a description that will be seen to fit the conflict described within the character of Conde. Thus *Pasado perfecto* is what Lukács described as a novel of disillusionment, that is; a novel foregrounding subjectivity in which the hero interprets the world entirely from within his own experience. In such novels there is a huge discrepancy between the hero's ideal and reality and this, according to Lukács, is manifested in the passing of time:

> The most profound and most humiliating impotence of subjectivity consists [...] in the fact that one cannot resist the progress of time. (1962: 120)

Thus the novel includes real time as one of its constituent principles. Time and the experience of it through memory make for meaning. Time gives meaning to existence and lived time, as comprehended in memory, is what gives the novel its true power:

> Only in the novel [...] does memory occur as a creative force [...] The duality of interiority and the outside world can be abolished for the subject if he (the subject) glimpses the organic unity of his whole life through the process by which his living present has grown from the stream of his past life damned up within his memory.(1962: 127)

For Lukács the novel of disillusionment is characterised by the sharp separation of the subject and object by the act of remembering. It is significant that Conde is precisely this kind of remembering hero; 'Un cabrón recordador' (*Máscaras* 1997:18) as his friend Flaco calls him.

In contrast to the espionage fiction of Chavarría or Nogueras discussed in Chapter 6, the Conde series of novels does not traverse geographical space. Conde does not have a sequential adventure which sees him travel from one space to another, but rather his narrative traverses the passage of time. There are a number of linked narratives taking place in *Pasado perfecto*, each with a different time-frame, and the reader is switched from one to the other as Conde's mind switches. The first time-frame is the present of

Havana in the winter of 1998-9, just after New Years' Day. The second is his own past, a sequence of episodes from his childhood usually invoked by experiences in the present. The third time frame is the past of the crime itself which is gradually revealed partly through Conde's own thoughts on the matter and partly through dialogues with witnesses and colleagues, such as his cross-eyed, skinny side-kick (his Sancho Panza), Sergeant Manuel Palacios. The story of the crime, in this case the disappearance of Rafael Morín, a high-ranking official, is not the only mystery to be solved. As well as asking what happened to Rafael Morín, this novel presents other questions, the most salient being: Who am I? The question of (self) identity informs the entire Conde series. Conde suffers in the present because he is not sure who he is. His remembering is an attempt to find out and, when he asks himself if it is possible to 'desfacer entuertos' he expresses the hope of achieving reconciliation. For him time is profoundly ambiguous; on the one hand it is the source of his pain and loss, yet it is also the fabric of his life, the substance of experience that provides him with the medium through which he tells his story. *Pasado perfecto* is thus an exercise on the theme of memory and the frustration of the lived experience.

Conde: The existentialist hero

Things are not what they used to be and, through his new case, Conde learns that perhaps things never were what they were supposed to be. The story is of a corrupt official, Rafael Morín Rodríguez, the head of the Empresa Mayorista de Importaciones y Exportaciones del Ministerio de Industrias. He has disappeared and Conde is dispatched to find him. Conde's search leads him into a re-discovery of his own past since Rafael was his contemporary at Pre-university college. *Pasado perfecto* is an ironic reference to

Morín's past because, at the beginning of the novel, it appears to be exemplary. Morín is a model of the revolutionary system; he was leader of the Federación Estudantil de Educación Media, an official of the Young Communist League, and to all appearances a loyal Communist who won medals for his mathematical genius and achieved all he ever desired, including a beautiful wife, Tamara, with whom Conde himself was once in love. This links Conde to the case personally since he is still in love with Tamara and relishes the fact that he will meet her again when he interviews her as a suspect. Conde breaks procedure by not declaring this personal interest and, as noted in Chapter 6, it was this plot detail that upset the judges of Ministry of Interior competition who denied Padura Fuentes the prize in 1991. Morín stole Tamara away from Conde while they were at Pre-university college together and this arouses the memory of those formative days in his life. Conde dislikes Morín because of his success. In contrast to Morín's sparkling career, Conde was reprimanded at college for writing a non-revolutionary story. He failed to be accepted for a university literature course, and had to study psychology instead. In the middle of his studies his father died and, in order to help out the family, he dropped out to become a policeman, a profession for which he seems completely unsuited not least because he drinks and smokes to excess and is a self-confessed womaniser.

However, Conde discovers that Morín was a fake; not only had he salted away government funds in Miami and planned to leave the island, he had also betrayed his wife. He was never what he appeared to be in personal as well as public matters. Conde on the other hand, through re-examining his own imperfect past emerges, for all his peccadilloes, as a decent, honest person. Thus the leading politician who appears to be honourable is rotten and the cop who appears to be dissolute is pure. The paradox is

not merely superficial; apart from their activities, there is a fundamental difference in the attitudes of the two men towards themselves.

The author's choice of writing the novel in the third person, from Conde's point of view, limits the reader's knowledge of Morín to Conde's experiences, thoughts and feelings, but it is clear that such self-questioning did not occur to Morín who is capable of tremendous self-deception. When Morín's entry into the Communist Party was postponed he had blamed his best friend, Miki. Miki tells Conde that shortly before Morín's application to join the CP was due to come up before the committee, two representatives visited him to ask for references. He had answered all their questions but shortly afterwards was visited by Morín who was furious:

> ...se apareció Rafael aquí que era un diablo: decía que le habían pospuesto la entrada al Partido por culpa mía, que yo no tenía que haber dicho que su mamá iba a la iglesia, ni que él fue a ver a la padre cuando vino por la Comunidad, si el viejo estaba más jodido que un perro sin dientes y era infeliz que siguió de plomero de mala muerte en Miami aunque él y la madre le decían a todo el mundo que el padre era un borracho y que estaba muerto.(1995: 145)

Miki discovered that the postponement had had nothing to do with Morín's parents but rather what they called 'rasgos de autosuficiencia' (1995: 146). It is this 'selfishness' which is Morín's downfall, not simply because it leads him to embezzle funds and try to leave the island but because it is the immediate cause of his death. Morín is killed in a fight with a colleague, René Maciques, in the safe house from which Morín is about to embark for Miami. When Maciques confesses to Conde he explains that he hated Morín but was involved in his web of corruption having kept a car to which he was not entitled. Morín was thus able to blackmail him by photocopying documents relating to the car and threatening to expose him. When the two men met for the last time, Maciques tells Conde and his assistant:

> ... fue más petulante y orgulloso que nunca, qué mierda de tipo, mi madre, alégrense de no haberlo conocido...¿Y ustedes saben lo primero que él me dijo cuando llegué? Que me iba a escribir desde Miami para decirme dónde había escondido las fotocopias, que estaban bien guardadas y que nadie las iba a descubrir. Entonces fui yo el que se puso mal y le dije lo que pensaba de él hacía mucho tiempo y él me tiró un piñazo...y fue cuando le di el empujón y se cayó contra el borde de la bañadera...Así fue todo.(1995: 208)

The investigation which has led Conde to this discovery involves a journey of self-examination. On his visits to his former love, Morín's wife, Tamara, he is forced to recall each occasion during his time at school when he came across the young Morín, then rising through the Party ranks. Conde has to face up to the fact that he was envious of Morín for his success and for being so apparently self-confident. Personal reasons aside, he had disliked Morín.

The core of this feeling turns on an episode concerning a short story Conde wrote at school entitled 'Domingos'. 'Domingos' never actually appears in the novel, it is only referred to but the remembered episode in which the story is censored functions as an embedded narrative which becomes the central motif of the whole Conde series. 'Domingos' is an autobiographical story, the publication of which precipitates one of the most traumatic events of Conde's youth. He wrote it while he was at the Pre-university college where he was a member of the literary workshop. It describes how when he was a child, his mother made him go to Mass on Sundays instead of allowing him to play baseball with his friends. This induces in Conde a sense of guilt:

> Me parecía muy anticlerical, había leido a Bocaccio y en el prólogo explicaban qué es ser anticlerical, y como la obligación de ir al iglesia me hizo ser a mí también anticlérico cuando quería ser pelotero, pues, se me occurió escribir el cuento y llevarlo al taller. (1995: 53)

The story is published in the first issue of a magazine *La Viboreña* named after the barrio where the school is situated, and is a great success among the students.

However, the day following publication Conde and his friends are brought before a committee composed of the college principal, the head of literature, the head of the Young Communist League, and Rafael Morín. The principal is angry about the contents of their magazine:

> ¿Qué quería decir ese lema de revista de que El Comunismo será una aspirina del tamaño del sol, acaso que el socialismo era un dolor de cabeza? ¿Qué pretendía la compañerita Ada Vélez con su crítica a la obra sobre los presos políticos en Chile, destruir los esfuerzos del grupo de teatro? ¿Por qué todos, todos los poemas de la revista eran de amor y no había uno solo dedicado a la obra de la Revolución, a la vida de un mártir, a la patria en fin? ¿Por que el cuento del compañerito Conde era de tema religioso y eludía una toma de partido en contra la iglesia y su enseñanza escolástica y retrograda? (1995: 54)

The literary reference, this time is to Roque Dalton's poem: *Sobre dolores de cabeza.* Written in Prague after the Soviet occupation in 1968, the poem is deliberately ironic:

> *Escrito en Praga*
>
> SOBRE DOLORES DE CABEZA
>
> Es bello ser comunista,
> aunque cause muchos dolores de cabeza.
>
> Y es que el dolor de cabeza de los comunistas
> se supone histórico, es decir
> que no cede ante las tabletas analgésicas
> sino sólo ante la realización del Paraíso en la tierra.
> Así es la cosa.
>
> Bajo el capitalismo nos duele la cabeza
> y nos arrancan la cabeza.
> En la lucha por la revolución la cabeza es una bomba de retardo.
>
> En la construcción socialista
> planificamos el dolor de cabeza
> lo cual no lo hace escasear, sino lo contrario.
>
> El Comunismo será entre otras cosas,
> un aspirina del tamaño del sol.
> (Undated anthology, Benedetti ed. *Poesía*: 183)

It is worth recalling that Dalton was assassinated in 1975 by ultra-leftists in his own Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo who doubted his revolutionary credentials. However, according to the sleeve notes of the undated Cuban edition, he was later posthumously exonerated of 'toda calumnia sobre su actitud de intelectual revolucionario.' Dalton could be said to be a martyr of free expression, a victim of dogmatists who failed to adequately understand his poetry. The episode also closely resembles an incident in Padura Fuentes's own career. As he explained to Verity Smith in an interview in 1996, during the early 1980s, he left the magazine *El caimán barbudo* 'por problemas bastantes desagradables'. Among the problems were decisions not to publish a story by Senel Paz about a student who commits suicide and an article about John Lennon by Gabriel García Márquez. The disagreements resulted in him being censured:

> Como casi todos los miembros de mi generación fui acusado de tener 'problemas ideológicos', como si un escritor podría vivir sn problemas ideológiocos. (Smith 1996: 2)

This is precisely what Conde and his colleagues experienced at the hands of their school principal and Rafael Morín. By asking why the students' poems did not eulogise the revolution, the Principal is calling to mind the kind of attitudes that prevailed in the 1970s when novels such as Cristóbal Pérez's *La ronda de los rubíes* were written.

Conde was born in 1955, and this moment of censorship episode at the *Pre*, when he was 17 years old, occurred in 1972, exactly one year *after* the Congress on Education and Culture, in the year when the prescriptive and highly didactic revolutionary crime novel was first promoted through the auspices of the Interior Ministry competition. Literary martyrdom and the later or posthumous vindication of intellectuals is the central theme of Padura Fuentes's third novel, *Máscaras,* which will be discussed in the next chapter. The allegorical tale in the early scene of this first novel already foregrounds a

forthright critique of the heavy-handed way authors were treated by the revolutionary vanguard at this time

Morín's intervention, repeating the Principal's sentiments, might also be a Party directive:

> ...compañero Director, dijo, después de este feo incidente, creo que es bueno hablar con los estudiantes, porque todos son excelentes compañeros y creo que van a entender lo que usted ha planteado...y creo que lo mejor es demostrar que pueden hacer una revista a la altura de estos tiempos en la que podamos resaltar la pureza, la entrega, el espíritu de sacrificio que debe primar en las nuevas generaciones (*sic*) (1995: 56).

Morín calls for a literature that will slavishly follow the Party line. This short episode dramatises the very problem discussed in Chapter 2 concerning the need for a literature that originates organically, that is not directed by imposed ideological expedience. Morín's idea produces a rebellion from some members of the group. Their teacher, Olguita, and Conde's friend El Cojo, leave the room in protest and both are later punished. Conde, on the other hand, is transfixed by fear:

> [...] y yo quise morirme como nunca he vuelto querer morirme en la vida, tenía miedo, no podía hablar pero no entendía mi culpa, si nada más había escrito lo que sentía y lo que me había pasado cuando era chiquito, que me gustaba más jugar pelota en la esquina que ir a la misa. (1995: 57)

Conde is punished for writing about what he feels. His failure is not to write about what he is told is necessary. This implies a fundamental honesty in his character that is contrasted with the falsity of his superiors. Conde's disillusionment is rooted at this very point when he encounters these officials. However, it is only later, after the passing of time, that he is able to realise their hypocrisy. Now, in the real-time of the novel, he can recall how the director was later expelled for a scandal known as 'Waterpre' in which he was found to have falsified examination results and other performance statistics so that their school would win the prize for being the best in the country. In that

investigation Morín only escaped suspicion by a whisker. At the time he was disciplined, Conde did not know this but nevertheless questioned the fact that he was being punished for having written a seemingly innocuous story.

A 'Waterpre' type scandal really did take place in Cuba in 1975, and, as discussed in Chapter 3, in 1987 a former leader of the young Communists, Orlando Domínguez, was expelled from his job as the head of Cuba's civil aviation authority for corruption.[2]. As Padura Fuentes stated in his disclaimer, no actual person is alluded to in the novel, but that should not prevent people from identifying with the characters if the cap fits. At issue in the novel is the fundamental value of the revolution. It is not simply a protest against censorship and the stifling of the artistic imagination; the fundamental question is a philosophical one about human self-awareness and hypocrisy.

Important in this respect is the question of faith. Morín is angered by the fact that Miki told the officials that his mother still went to Church. The clear implication is that parents who are believers are a liability. Conde felt himself to be anti-clerical because he wanted to play baseball with his friends, but was forced to go church by his mother. He is later castigated by the Principal for having written a story about religion that failed to mention the Party decision against the Church and its 'escolástica y retrograda' (1995: 54) teachings. In other novels, in particular *Máscaras* and *Paisaje de otoño* (1998), Catholicism is a recurrent theme. In *Máscaras* Conde consults the poet Eligio Riego, (alluding to the real poet Eliseo Diego). Riego describes how Catholics were marginalised by the establishment:

> Pero en una época se estimó que no era apropriada la visón del mundo y de la vida que teníamos los escritores católicos, que nuestra fidelidad estaba empañada por fidelidades espirituales irrenunciables y por tanto no éramos confiables, además de ser retrogrados y filosóficamente idealistas ¿no? Y nos apataron discretamente. (1997: 184)

The poet adds that the decision was taken by 'alguien con mentalidad moscovita'. Once again this is an allusion to the period in the early 1970s when Soviet style solutions were applied in Cuba on an extensive scale. Writing in the period prior to the Pope's visit to Cuba in January 1998, Maria López Vigil, editor of the Nicaraguan political journal *Envío,* describes precisely the history of this process:

> The 1970s were years of institutionalisation for the revolution [...] Cuba turned more decidedly to the USSR [...] Soviet style Marxism, now present in the revolution took over all turf and imposed its dogmas. (1997: 20)

The Cubans, she writes, imported manuals from the USSR that distorted and defamed essential aspects of Marx's original ideas and imposed them throughout the island in a manner strangely similar to the methods of rote learning of the catechism adopted by some Catholic orders. These Soviet texts taught that the greatest of human errors was 'idealism', and identified all religions with idealism and mysticism:

> [...] The massive indoctrination through manuals impoverished Cuban Marxism [and] attacked the national culture [...] Public school teaching - the only education - adopted the postulates of "the scientific concept of the world," that of dialectic and historical materialism understood through the manuals dogmatically. (1997: 20)

This episode in the life of Conde is a fictional snapshot that represents an actual event. It is clear that Padura Fuentes is writing a form of history, a fictional biography, in which there is an obvious parallel between Conde's life and that of significant events in the course of the Cuban revolution. The question haunting Conde is his own mistaken path. Where did he go wrong? But it is also possible to read his recollections as direct comments on and references to the question of: 'Where did the revolution go wrong'. Dalton's poem was written after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The poem does not sit well with the Principal because it conflicts with his notion that the system is perfect.

Conde is a Catholic boy. In the real-time of the novel he is long lapsed, but he remains constantly haunted by his Catholic education. His mother made him go to Church, which set him apart from the other boys. At a time when religion was viewed so badly by the authorities, he must have grown up with an ambivalence towards the revolution and, at least, its atheism. When the Principal admonishes him, Conde feels afraid. He is doubly anguished. First, he feels guilty because he ought to want to go to mass. Second, he cannot understand why he has committed an error by expressing his feelings. Why does he feel anguish? The answer is philosophical and can be explained by referring to Sartre's existentialist philosophy. The dilemma hinges around the conflict between desire and duty towards authority.

Conde concludes that he must have been anti-clerical because he really did not want to go to mass and preferred playing baseball instead. But he went in order to fulfil his sense of duty and obey his mother's command. Paradoxically however, this only makes his dilemma worse because he did not *choose* to go to mass freely. He was compelled to do so against his true wishes. By going to mass and going through the motions of worship, he was lying to himself. He was obliged to pretend that that was what he really wanted to do. This paradox is mirrored from the point of view of the Church. The obligation to attend Mass produces the opposite effect than the one desired, that is, a person who keeps the faith willingly. Sartre referred to this in *Being and Nothingness* (1943:1989) as *mauvaise foi* or bad faith. Conde experiences what Sartre terms *L'atrui,* living according to the expectations of others. In Sartrean morality this is just one of five possible ways to take refuge in bad faith. The others include those living according to a strict code established by others (*Les salauds*), which can be applied to the Principal. Indeed, when we view the problem from the Principal's position we can see that the paradox of the Church in gaining attenders but not believers is repeated in a secular

fashion by his act of censoring the magazine. He wants the students to produce works praising the revolution but the students do not wish to do so. By prohibiting them from writing what they truly feel, the Party leaders only succeed in making false revolutionaries. The ultimate paradox is that those who are in charge of this policy are themselves 'false'.

This dualism calls to mind the Sartrean paradox expressed in the oxymoron: 'Man is a being who is what he is not and is not what he is.'(1995: 67). For Sartre, human beings are divided between their being *in-itself*, their physical existence, and their being *for-itself*, their consciousness of existing. Our consciousness arises out of our existence but is a separate 'being' since it is aware of our being *in-itself* and is also aware of itself. Thus we can be aware of what our body is doing at the same time as being aware of what our mind is doing. For example, when we are seated in the cinema we may suddenly become aware of ourselves watching the screen. At this point we are directly aware of ourselves watching the screen and indirectly aware of what is happening on the screen. Conversely, when we become completely engrossed in the film, we 'forget' about ourselves for the moment and lose the awareness of our being in the cinema at all. At this moment we are unaware of our physical existence, our being in-itself. This separation in our being, according to Sartre, is filled with *nothingness*; meaning that while we are alive we can never truly be at one with ourselves since the very act of being aware of oneself separates or *nihilates* [3] us from our being.

This separation makes it possible for us to lie to ourselves, and believe our own lies. When we do this it is 'bad faith' or *mauvaise foi*; one convinces oneself that what one actually does is not what one's real self does. While our body may do one thing our consciousness denies that this is really happening. In this way it becomes possible for a person to believe that they never do certain acts that they objectively do. As an example

of this Sartre describes the actions of a prudish girl who pretends to be unaware of the sexual intentions of a suitor. By refusing to acknowledge the true intention of his conversation, she pretends that she and her suitor are merely talking. The boy holds her hand but in order to avoid facing this reality, the girl adopts the attitude that the hand does not really belong to her. She says to herself, he might be touching my hand, but that is not really *me*. She is in bad faith. To her the hand has become a *thing*, separated from her being.

To do something in bad faith, then, is to consciously separate and negate a part of one's self. In good faith, however, although we are aware of the dilemma of not being at one with ourselves, we recognise this and strive against it. In Sartrean morality it is a question of accepting that life is a torment and facing up to it. Humanity's problems arise because people seek to avoid this responsibility by lying to themselves in bad faith. The paradox is that this does not lead to total escape because the act of lying to oneself necessarily implies choice; 'Man is condemned to choose.' [4] Man's destiny therefore is in his hands and what he chooses today is what determines what he will be tomorrow and what he will be in tomorrow's past. Our decisions on how we act in the present are absolutely important.

Conde does not know why he chose to be a policeman and his thoughts constantly return to the time when he made that decision. When his boss, Rangel, asks him why he became a cop, Conde replies: 'No lo sé jefe, hace doce años que lo estoy averigüando y todavía no sé por qué' (1995:23). When Tamara asks him he replies:

> Es muy fácil. Soy policía por dos razones: una que desconzco y que tiene que ver con el destino, que me llevó a esto.
> ¿Y la que conoces? - insiste ella y él siente la expectación de la mujer y sabe que la va a defraudar.
> -La otra es muy simple, Tamara, y a lo mejor hasta te da risa, pero es la verdad: porque no me gusta que los hijos de puta hagan cosas impunemente.

-Todo un codo ético - dice ella [...] (1995: 84)

Note that the ethical code includes what Conde says about destiny. This is a further clue to the philosophy informing the Conde books: a deep preoccupation with existence. The journey that Conde makes towards his ultimate destiny as a writer is punctuated by his gradual realisation that his destiny is in his own hands, that he is empowered to consciously choose it.

Later in the novel we are told how Conde chose to be a policeman, when he remembers the day he left university before completing his studies. The importance of the passage is signalled by the opening phrase: 'El día preciso que su vida cambió'. That day, Conde recalls, he had been asking himself: 'cómo se hacen los destinos de la gente' (1995: 132-135). This question was prompted by the fact that he had recently read Thornton Wilder's *Bridge Over the River San Luis* and had been struck by the way destiny had brought seven strangers to meet on the bridge in Peru and fall to their deaths when it broke. The passage describes how the vice-dean of his faculty had tried to persuade him not to give up and then, when he insisted on leaving, introduced him to a police captain who convinced him to join the police. Wilder's detective story had fascinated him, and so we may conclude that Conde was attracted to the police for that literary reason. We are told Conde's father had died and the family needed money; the police chief promises him an immediate salary. Conde recalls how he had never thought of being a policeman until that day, how he felt he was unsuited: ' soy muy regado, dijo, y me encantan los Beatles' (1995:133), but this does not matter to the captain who tells Conde that they know very well who he is. All these factors are considered but in the end Conde's conclusion is absolutely Sartrean:

> Pero podía recordar que el día preciso que su vida cambió se había preguntado qué cosa es el destino y tuvo una sola respuesta: decir sí o decir no. Si puedes. Yo pude eligir, Tamara. (1995: 135)

In Chapter 10, the issue of choice in relation to the last novel *Paisaje de otoño,* will be discussed further. There is a fundamental dichotomy between Conde's group of friends and the revolution, that hinges on the fact that their freedom to choose has been limited, or that they have avoided difficult choices for an easier existence which inevitably turns out to be unfulfilling. As noted in chapter 7, the theme of the emptiness of existence recurs throughout the series. At times Padura Fuentes almost paraphrases Sartre's *Being and Nothingness.* The second chapter of *Máscaras* opens with the following paragraph:

> Lo peor de todo era la sensación de vacío. Mientras el timbre del reloj taladraba el cerebro de Conde[...] el vacío iba recuperando su lugar como una mancha de petróleo súbitamente liberada que se extiende sobre el mar de la conciencia: pero se trataba de una mancha sin color, proque era el vacío y la nada, era el fin que siempre comenzaba, uno y otro dia, con aquella implacable capacidad de renovación contra la que no tenía defensa ni argumentos válidos: quince para la siete era lo único tangible en medio del vacio. (1997: 27)

Such is Conde's feeling of 'nothingness' that;

> [...] el Conde se preguntaba cuál sería la razón última que lo impulsaba aún a poner los relojes en hora y las alarmas a punto, cuando el tiempo era, precisamente, la manifestación más objetiva de su vacío. Y como no hallaba una razón convincente— ¿sentido de deber?, ¿responsibilidad?, ¿necesidad de ganar la vida?, ¿movimiento por inercia?—... (1997: 28)

This description of Conde coming into consciousness and his consciousness being immediately made aware of time is so close to Sartre that it is hard to imagine that Padura Fuentes is not familiar with the French philosopher's work (see for example 'The Origin of Nothingness' in *Being and Nothingness* 1989: 21-45). Sartre's ideas about *la nada* the 'concrete nothingness' in man, is the gap between our consciousness of ourselves and our physical *in-itself.* When we awake from sleep, our self as consciousness or *for-itself* is reborn. Conde is acutely aware of this separation. His

reminiscing is part of his struggle to face up to the fact that he must choose to do what pleases him, that is, write stories rather than investigate them in the form of solving murders. He is not a victim of circumstances that do not permit him choices, he can make the change for himself. Sartre's notion of bad faith suggests that people tend to see themselves as victims of their environment and 'heredity' or as being 'cursed' by not being able to be what they would wish to be, they then choose to accommodate themselves to it. In good faith, people realise that while they can never be entirely at one with themselves, they still recognise the need to struggle towards the being they would wish to be.

If this morality is applied to Conde and Morín, we can see that Conde is striving to be in good faith. He is aware that his desires are in conflict with his conscience and this worries him. Whereas Morín, with his apparent lack of awareness of his own selfishness and obvious hypocrisy, is always in bad faith. When Conde discovers the truth about Morín, his boss, Rangel, cannot understand Morín's actions and asks Conde: 'Pero ahora dime una cosa, Mario ¿por qué un hombre como Rafael Morín pudo hacer una cosa como esa?' (1995: 190). Rangel is tormented by the problem: Morín had success, a top position, popularity, a huge house, a beautiful wife. So why did he want more? In a beautifully written passage, Conde walks through the warm drizzle of an Havana evening, surveying the Paseo del Prado replete with prostitutes, money touts and gays and contemplates the question. His journey leads him to the Floridita restaurant, which is closed for repair:

> [...] y perdió la esperanza de un añejo doble, sin hielo, sentado en el rincón que fuera exclusivo del viejo Hemingway, recostado a aquella barra de madera inmortal donde Papa y Ava Gardner se besaron escandalosamente y donde se hubiera preguntado otra vez la misma pregunta para darse todavía la única respuesta que lo dejaba vivir en paz: porque siempre fue un hijo de puta. ¿Y por qué más? (1995: 194)

Morín is not a victim of circumstance, he does not deserve any sympathy for having become a criminal. In effect, he chose his fate because he was always a 'hijo de puta.'

Inherent in this conclusion is a fundamentally distinct approach to the notions of criminality familiar in previous Cuban crime fiction. There is no indication that there might be a psychological trauma in Morín's past, or that the CIA is involved. There are no extraneous excuses for his behaviour. Conde's conclusion that Morín was simply evil implicitly challenges the Cuban revolutionary project. Firstly, it implies a denial of Rousseau's idea of humanity's innate purity and eventual perfectibility, upon which the philosophy of Marxism is based. Marxism suggests that greed, selfishness and amorality are inculcated by upbringing. In a socialist society criminality ought to 'wither away' as generations brought up through socialist education will exhibit progressively fewer signs of past imperfections brought about by capitalism. Here, Conde's attitude suggests that at least in the case of Morín, the system had failed. However, there is a second way in which this conclusion subverts the Cuban revolutionary view of morality in that it reaffirms the Sartrean idea that individuals ultimately *choose* their destiny. Morín chose to be the way he was. He was a man of influence, wealth and power who could have decided to be honest but instead gave in to greed and selfishness. The novel focuses on the individual's subjective choice rather than viewing man as an object of external conditioning. This is crucially distinct from Marxism. Orthodox Marxism sees man as an object in the stream of history whereas Sartrean philosophy sees history as the object of man. While Marxists are fond of the adage (taken from *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* 1852): man makes history but not in circumstances of his own choosing, Sartre suggests rather that man must choose to create himself. Hence this kind of thinking challenges notions of party orthodoxy or ideologies, and prizes individual

freedom and human dignity above conformity. We have already seen how Conde responded to the dictated values of his college principal. In this sense, therefore, we can conclude that Conde is an existentialist hero.

Breaking cultural barriers

I shall return to the question of existentialist morality in Chapter 10. But it is necessary at this point to pose the more prosaic question, how it is permissible for Padura Fuentes to write like this? He is attacking, after all, the socialist ideas and practices upon which the Cuban revolution is based. The obvious answer, as we have already seen, is that the Soviet Union is no more and socialism has failed. Nevertheless, according to the novel published in Mexico in 1991, *Pasado perfecto* was written in the July 1990, during the process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Timing is very important. Here is an author who is committing to paper ideas which were by no means generally accepted. In this sense, Padura Fuentes can be seen as a courageous author, sensitive to the changes taking place around him. Verity Smith (1998) has commented on how Padura Fuentes was courting criticism from some sections of the Cuban establishment. This might explain why the judges felt unable to give the novel the Ministry of Interior prize. However, it is also important to note that Padura Fuentes was not entirely on unsafe ground in being so bold because there were plenty of voices in agreement at the time. The methods of the Soviet Union had been criticised in Cuba long before 1989, not least by Fidel Castro himself. As Eckstein (1994) and Stubbs (1989) have described, Castro's announcement of the process of *Rectificación* in April 1986 was the official break with Soviet methods, marking the moment when it became possible to openly acknowledge what had been gradually realised throughout Cuban society earlier, that the

'Russification' of the Cuban economy and society was a mistake. This was described by the Cuban philosopher Juan Antonio Blanco as the revolution's 'worst error':

> I would say that the worst error we committed, the one with the most dramatic and lasting effects, was the decision to follow the Soviet model of socialism. Those 15 years [1971-86] of "Russification" of our socialism left us with problems in almost every realm of Cuban society. (1994: 24)

Blanco, the head of the Felix Varela Centre, one of a number of new Cuban independent 'think tanks', adds that the Russian methods resulted in a vertical command system based upon authoritarian central planning, an unwieldy bureaucracy that stifled creativity and limited pluralism. This also had social consequences:

> Socially, an attempt to legitimize special privileges for a new managerial bureaucratic strata negatively affected the revolutionary spirit of our process. Culturally, it killed the possibility of using social science - and Marxism for that matter- as a useful tool in the construction of the new society when they were transformed into a religious creed for the apologetic praising of official policies. (1994: 24)

Describing the origins of the rectification process Blanco states that during the early 1980s it became obvious that the system was not working properly. While the economic ties with the Soviet bloc remained the government moved away from the Soviet model politically and socially:

> We distanced ourselves from the idea that what worked for the Soviets would necessarily work for the Cubans, and yes, we also started to realize that this model was not even working that well for the Soviets. I think Fidel himself had the wisdom of seeing what was going to happen in the Soviet bloc before it started. Remember, he launched the rectification process before perestroika even existed. (1994: 25)

Padura Fuentes, by implicitly criticising the Soviet Union in often ironic and sardonic ways is not voicing unfamiliar opinions. If Blanco is correct, then the ideas ironically and humorously expressed in Dalton's poem, had already existed in Cuban society for at

least half a decade when Padura Fuentes came to write *Pasado perfecto.* However, that being said, Padura Fuentes is the first author to encapsulate them in detective fiction. He is a pioneer in this limited sense although he should not be viewed as a 'dissident' author. He articulates serious concerns about the nature of Cuban socialism through a fictional medium, taking advantage of the cultural opening that accompanied the collapse of the old Soviet ways. In this sense, he is part of a process and his Conde novels are a cultural expression of the transformation that has taken place in Cuban society since 1989.

Padura claims to be more of a cause than an effect in this process. Speaking to the *El Nuevo Herald,* the *Miami Herald's* Spanish language newspaper, in May 1999 he said:

> "En los últimos años se han producido síntomas de permisibilidad y tolerancia que antes no existían, y no porque el gobierno lo deseara", dijo Padura, de 43 anos. "Los escritores se han ganado ese espacio poema a poema, cuento a cuento".
> En declaraciones a *El Nuevo Herald* explicó que si en años precedentes - como la década de los 70 - se impuso oficialmente en Cuba una literatura "de reafirmación revolucionaria", la que están haciendo hoy las nuevas generaciones de escritores puede calificarse "de interrogación".
> "Es una literatura que interroga a la realidad, la problematiza y busca hurgar en los problemas actuales", añadio. (Canción Isla *El Nuevo Herald* Website 4 May 1999)

Apart from promoting this process of self-questioning, the fact that Padura Fuentes is able to make this kind of statement in Miami is proof that the collapse of the Soviet Union has had the effect of forcing Cuba to open up to the world. Economically and diplomatically Cuba now has more ties with other countries than ever before. This is because it has had to seek new markets to maintain its economy under the United States' embargo. Shortages of paper and resources have placed writers in the situation where they must try to make a living by publishing outside Cuba and this has had the effect of changing the way in which they approach their task. Padura Fuentes is also writing for

an international and diasporic audience. The concerns he expresses appeal because in crucial ways they comply with Western notions of Soviet communism. Padura Fuentes has achieved tremendous success outside Cuba. According to the article in the *Herald* he is now one of the most important cultural figures:

> Padura, que aparece fotografiado en la polémica edicion de *Cigar Aficionado* como una de las figuras mas influyentes en Cuba hoy, está de paso por la ciudad. La pasada semana estuvo en Puerto Rico ofreciendo conferencias y promocionando *Paisaje de otoño*, su mas reciente novela publicada por la editorial española Tusquets.
> Con una prolífica obra que incluye novelas, cuentos, ensayos y cinco guiones cinematográficos, Padura es uno de los autores cubanos de mayor promoción internacional. Sus libros están siendo publicados con éxito en España, con iminentes ediciones en francés, italiano y alemán, por casas europeas como Metelie, Tropea y Ammann. (Cancio Isla *El Nuevo Herald* Website 4 May 1999)

Padura's success is inextricably linked to the way in which he is part of an artistic vanguard successfully challenging the dogmatism that characterised previous Cuban cultural policy. His major achievement is to find a way in which it is possible to be critical of the revolution and at the same time escape the label 'counter-revolutionary'. Furthermore, his success inside and outside the island suggests that he is able to write in a way which is meaningful to both audiences. What is perhaps perceived outside the island as a thinly disguised attack upon the evils of the past may have a different signification to Cuban readers. This talent for ambiguity enhances the literary quality of the work. In this Padura is obviously not alone but forms part of a wave of intellectuals who have pushed back the barriers of the permissible. Among these are the late film-director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and the writer, Senel Paz, whose film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993) changed public attitudes towards homosexuality in Cuba. Homosexuality is one of the central concerns of Padura Fuentes's third Conde novel, *Máscaras* (1997) which he wrote during 1994 and 1995, *after* the success of the film. Both novel and film broach

formerly taboo subjects that are undoubtedly still unpalatable to some members of the Cuban hierarchy. However, such are the forces for change, that the process is irreversible. As Padura Fuentes says, Cuban authors have themselves created a space in which to express themselves. In the next chapter, I shall examine at this cultural opening more closely with respect to homosexuality, a subject that for various reasons is also inextricably linked to the questions of intellectual freedom and individual identity in Cuba.

Notes

[1] Carlos Gómez Fernández in his *Enciclopedia de Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1962: 327) notes that Don Quijote is described as a 'desfacedor de agravios' and as 'el famoso caballero Don Quijote de la Mancha que desfaze los tuertos.' *The Diccionario María Moliner* lists the phrase 'desfacedor de entuertos' as a familiar phrase meaning 'Righter of wrongs'.

[2] These scandals are referred to in 'No habrá brecha', *Cuba Internacional*, (August 1987: 3-4). This article cites a speech given by Fidel Castro after the famous 'Landy' case. 'Landy' was the affectionate nickname given to Domínguez, a former leader of the Young Communists and a favourite of Castro. He was promoted to the directorship of the aviation authority but then jailed after it was discovered he had embezzled thousands of dollars. This case occurred almost two years before the more famous and destructive Ochoa scandal.

[3] Nihilate (néantir) is a word coined by Sartre. Consciousness exists as consciousness by making a nothingness arise between it and the object of which it is conscious. Thus nihilation is that by which consciousness exists. To nihilate therefore literally means to encase with a shell of non-being. (Sartre 1989: 632).

[4] According to Sartre, the existence of consciousness implies a being that is For-itself. A being that exists and is aware of its existence. This implies that the For-itself must forever choose itself, that is, make itself. In this sense the being must determine what it wishes. Thus man is condemned by his consciousness to have to choose. (Sartre 1989: 632).

Chapter 9

Critiques of sexual and political intolerance in *Máscaras* and the film *Fresa y chocolate*

Máscaras, like *Pasado perfecto*, is a carefully chosen title which carries a variety of meanings. These meanings might best be highlighted by referring to the translations of the word into English. Colin Smith's *Collins diccionario inglés* (1987) lists two definitions of *máscara* and three variations of the first. All are applicable to readings of Padura Fuentes's novel:

> **Máscara 1** *nf* **(a)** mask; — **antigás** gasmask; — **para esgrima** fencing mask; — **de oxígeno** oxygen mask.
> **(b)** —**s** masque, masquerade
> **(c)** *(fig)* mask; disguise; **quitar la — a uno** to unmask someone; **quitarse la** — to reveal oneself.
> **2** *nmf* masked person.
> (1971: 363)

Thus *Máscaras* means: 'masks' in the sense of the object placed upon our faces and in the sense of 'masquerade'; a gathering or social event in which people wear disguises, and a 'masque', a traditional form of theatre presentation in which the actors wear masks. It is significant that the title of the book is in the plural because had it been in the singular this latter level of meaning would not be applicable. Figuratively, it can be used to describe fakeness: *to remove the mask* meaning to reveal the truth about a person or thing. Finally, and most interestingly, the noun can also be used to define a person who wears a mask.

This novel continues the theme of hidden or split identity which characterises *Pasado perfecto*. The cover of the Tusquets edition (1997) depicts a painting by the acclaimed contemporary Cuban artist Roberto Fabelo which was specially commissioned.

It is a portrait of the murderer, Faustino Arayán, with the corpse of his victim, his transvestite son, draped over his head. Arayán is depicted with three faces. One of the faces appears to be an iron mask riveted to the back of his head. A white dog guards the scene which appears surrounded in red drapes reminiscent of the theatre. The cover thus simultaneously captures all possible the meanings. The novel is concerned with the ways in which identity is hidden behind masks that are presented to the world and thus how society itself becomes a masquerade in which nobody is their 'true' self and everyone adopts different personae. It is not a peculiarly Cuban or recent idea as Shakespeare famously expressed it in *As You Like It:* 'All the world's a stage...'(1963: line 139). Furthermore, disguise and the act of covering up are fundamental principles upon which the detective genre depends. The act of revelation is the consummation of every detective plot.

One of the novel's chief characters is an ageing dramatist and the victim is a transvestite who, when murdered, was dressed as the protagonist in one of Cuban theatre's most celebrated plays, *Electra Garrigó* (1948) by Virgilio Piñera. This is interesting because, as the name implies, *Electra Garrigó* is a reworking of the Greek tragedy in which all the actors wore masks. A satire on the state of Cuban society during the 1940s, *Electra Garrigó* is cited by Padura Fuentes in the frontispiece to the novel:

> PEDAGOGO: (...) 'No, no hay salida posible.
> ORESTES: Queda el sofisma.
> PEDAGOGO: Es cierto. En ciudad tan envanecida como ésta, de hazañas que nunca se realizaron, de monumentos que jamás se erigieron, de virtudes que nadie practica, el sofisma es el arma por excelencia. Si alguna de las mujeres sabias te dijera que ella es fecunda autora de tragedias, no oses contradecirla; si un hombre te afirma que es consumado crítico secúndalo en su mentira. Se trata, no lo olvides, de una ciudad en la que todo el mundo quiere ser engañado.
>
> Virgilio Piñera: *Electra Garrigó*, acto III

(Cited in Padura Fuentes 1997 Tusquets ed. *Máscaras*: 11)

Padura Fuentes, by quoting this passage, intends the novel to be read as an ironic reference to present-day Cuban society, especially when Piñera was persecuted as a gay intellectual, as was Alberto Marqués, the gay theatre director in the novel, whose fictional life closely resembles that of a number of real people. I shall return to this aspect later. The reference in the quotation to sophistry, or 'specious fallacy', indicates that the novel can be understood as dealing with a universal as well as a peculiarly Cuban theme. If, in effect, Padura Fuentes is suggesting that a criticism of Cuba in a previous epoch is still valid today, he implies that revolutionary Cuba is not much different in this regard from the society which went before. People are still acting falsely. Thus he refers to a basic view of the human condition: the splitting of identity between public and private, conscious and unconscious, objective and subjective, in Sartrean terms; in the ways in which we act in bad faith.

There is an essentially schizophrenic quality about Padura Fuentes's characters. They all, to varying degrees of hypocrisy, lead double lives. This is highly significant and by no means limited to Padura Fuentes's fiction. Falsity and pretence are features of Cuban reality. It is now commonly recognised that daily life in Cuba implies dealing in some way with the illegal black market because so many of the daily necessities of life, from shampoo to transistor radio batteries, are almost impossible to come by. This has affected the lives of all Cubans. For example, in *Bridges to Cuba* (Behar and Leon eds. 1994) Teresa Marrero, a Cuban-American university Professor, publishes some of her correspondence with her cousin Isabel, who lives a disillusioned life in Havana. Isabel writes in 1991:

> Since I separated from my husband I have begun to work within my field as an economist, in a housing project here in Arroyo

> Naranjo. I got the job through a good friend whose sympathies are like mine, but she has learned to hide them better. Anyway, everybody knows that people here don't say what they really think and everything is a charade. (Marrero in Behar and Leon eds.1994a: 463)

This 'charade' is the major preoccupation of young writers like Padura Fuentes and Senel Paz, the author of the short story *El bosque, el lobo y el hombre nuevo* (1991)and the screenplay of the internationally acclaimed, though not universally liked, film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993), based upon it.[1] Indeed, Jorge Perugorría who performed the character of Diego in the film admits:

> I think that the double standard of morality has been one of the most damaging defects of the revolution, and that the game of masks, of people who put on a mask in their lives, is alive and well in our society. Also, even people who have tried to be honest have used the game of masks in life as a means of survival. This they did because of problems that were suppressed for a long time. (Cited in Berringer 1996: 70)

What follows is a comparison between two cultural forms, the film *Fresa y chocolate* and the novel *Máscaras* to show the extent to which they share this preoccupation with the 'moral double standards' in the revolution, and in particular how this is embodied in the revolution's treatment of homosexuals and intellectuals.[2]

Senal Paz, born in 1950, is slightly older than Padura Fuentes but both were educated entirely by the revolutionary education system. Paz feels perhaps that he owes slightly more to the revolution than Padura Fuentes since he is the son of farmers and came from the countryside to study in Havana, the first person in his family to do so.[3] Padura Fuentes, on the other hand, has an urban background and is from more well-to-do parents. Prior to the success of the film *Fresa y Chocolate*, Paz had another success in Cuba with the film *Adorables mentiras* (1992) directed by Gerardo Chijona, which as the title implies, deals directly and humorously with the lies that Cubans tell themselves and others in order to preserve personal dignity as well as public face. In that film, the

actress Mirta Ibarra plays the prostitute Nancy who is resurrected to form a central character in *Fresa y chocolate* (also played by Ibarra) whose personal conflicts drive her to suicide attempts. Catherine Davies (1996) sees Nancy, over whom the two main male protagonists compete, as representative of Cuba: 'a nation about to self-destruct' (1996: 179). Significantly, one of these protagonists, Diego, is an older, non-Marxist, gay intellectual, while the other, David, is youthful, macho and revolutionary. *Fresa y chocolate* thus shares with the novels of Padura Fuentes an allegorical quality. The audience is *supposed* to read this film as a comment on the present situation in Cuba, its referencing is too direct for it be interpreted otherwise. Although it is the first Cuban feature to ever treat the question of homosexuality unflinchingly, *Fresa y chocolate* is not merely a 'coming out film'. As Johannes Birringer (1996) has pointed out, by examining Cuban culture through the personality of Diego, the out-of-the-closet queen (or *loca* in the South American vernacular), *Fresa y chocolate* also traces Cuban revolutionary history and the periods of prejudice and internal contradiction, dogmatism and intolerance. Thus, like Padura Fuentes in his detective series, Paz also raises questions about national identity and destiny.

The film asks the question explicitly, if in the future sexual difference and intellectual dissidence will be openly acknowledged and valued. In some respects the publication of *Máscaras* in Cuba in 1997 affirms that, for the time being at least, the answer to that question is in the affirmative since, as we shall see, the treatment which Padura Fuentes gives to these issues is rather more explicit and uncompromising than the film. Both authors seem to be saying that while the revolution and notions of the Cuban nation are intimately linked they are not entirely. There is a slippage within the Cuban national psyche between what it means to be Cuban and what it means to be a revolutionary Cuban. This slippage has understandably become more noticeable in the 'special period'

since 1989 as the revolutionary state has been less able to meet the needs of the population and the ideas which underpinned the revolutionary state have been called into question.

The title *Fresa y chocolate* itself is a reference to a diversity of 'tastes' and possibly races. Hence *fresa*/pink suggests white skin colouring and gay, and *chocolate*/brown suggests black skin colouring and macho. This difference is quite clearly signalled in the film and is a framing motif presented at the beginning and the end and one which symbolises reconciliation between Diego and David. In the end, David deliberately chooses strawberry ice cream and gives the chocolate to Diego, the reverse of what happened in the beginning. Thus the film dramatises a splitting (and reassembling) in the Cuban identity and intentionally foregrounds the tensions and double standards within Cuban society.

It is perhaps not surprising that these tensions and double standards should manifest themselves in both *Máscaras* and *Fresa y chocolate* as conflicts that coalesce around the persecution of homosexual intellectuals. As noted in Chapter 3, the cultural history of the Cuban revolution has not been without incident or its *causes celèbres* in the liberal 'West', all of which in one way or another concern either homosexuals or intellectuals or, in some salient cases, both.[4] It would appear that western liberalism's sensitivity to any limiting of the freedom of expression in Socialist countries has ensured widespread coverage outside Cuba of cases such as the closure of the literary supplement *Lunes de Revolución* (1961), and the Padilla Affair (1971), both discussed in Chapter 2. Similarly, in the field of individual human rights, the West has also seized upon examples of repression from the revolutionary regime. Thus, the sending of homosexuals to the UMAP work camps in the 1960s and the incarceration of HIV positive patients in sanitoria during the 1980s were widely publicized outside the island. For internal

political reasons, until the release of *Fresa y chocolate,* the persecution of homosexuals was a taboo subject and it was the film's breaking of this taboo which is widely accepted as the primary factor in accounting for its success. The film's phenomenal popularity at the box office indicated that it touched a deep nerve in the social body. The homosexual theme was also undoubtedly primarily responsible for its international success and discussion of the film has concentrated upon this aspect.[5] Such readings however come at the expense of an equally important level of discourse in the film which is concerned with the nature of artistic expression and the role it should play in revolutionary society. Any discussion of the film ought to take into account the nature of the relationship between homosexuality and the limiting of artistic freedom. I have already discussed the fact that the limiting of artistic expression is a primary concern in Padura Fuentes's *Pasado perfecto*; it is also integral to the novel *Máscaras* which deals with this issue in an even more explicit and polemical manner. The remainder of the chapter therefore will closely examine and compare the relationship between these two phenomena as they are portrayed in the film and the novel with the intention of trying to understand the problematic they represent in Cuba today.

A close reading of *Fresa y chocolate* reveals that it is not because Diego is gay *per se* that he leaves the island. At the beginning of the film, we learn that Diego is a working art critic and photographer who is planning an exhibition with his friend, Germán, a sculptor. When he attempts to seduce David, it is his penchant for banned books and 'la bebida del enemigo' rather than his homosexuality which makes him a focus of suspicion. David begins to spy upon Diego, not because he is gay, but because he has strange, foreign things in his flat. David's friend Miguel, who convinces him to return to Diego's flat as a spy, only becomes suspicious of Diego when David mentions an embassy is interested in Germán's exhibition. It is only then that Miguel's and

David's homophobia becomes focused on the idea that Diego might be a counter-revolutionary.

The crucial question invited by the film is: Would Diego have been picked on if he were straight? The answer is most likely to be yes, if, as a straight intellectual he had displayed the same critical and foreign tendencies. However, if the question is reversed: Would Diego have been picked on if he were a pro-revolutionary gay? The answer is likely to be no. A pro-revolutionary gay would not carry a banned book beneath his arm so ostentatiously, nor would he champion an obviously conflictive exhibition. It is this curious mixture of gay *and* dissident issues which makes the film work. Without one or the other the story would be very different and possibly would never have been permitted. A film about the persecution of an intellectual just because he was an intellectual, or of a gay just because he was gay would not have worked in the same way.

In *Máscaras* the dramatist Alberto Marqués was a prominent director whose theatre company was closed down during a witch hunt. He was undoubtedly the victim of homophobic officials, but there was also a definite degree of ideological discrimination. Significantly, Marqués's international links, in particular, his familiarity with France and his friendship with Jean Paul Sartre are cited as factors contributing to him being singled out for persecution. The play that Marqués was preparing and causes his downfall was a version of Piñera's *Electra Garrigó* to be played by actors in drag. His idea as described to Conde is strikingly similar to the idea already established in Chapter 8 as Padura Fuentes's prime concern namely, the existential duty to pro-actively choose one's destiny. Marqués tells Conde how he explained his production of the play to Sartre himself:

> Lo que quería ni más ni menos, era darle proyección poética transcendente, fuera de un tiempo concreto, pero en espacio preciso, a una tragedia que el autor concibió como una disyuntiva

> familiar: quedarse o partir, acatar o desobedecer, o lo mismo de siempre, desde Edipo y Hamlet: ser o no ser...(1997: 166)

The dilemma explained in this way sums up Diego's in *Fresa y chocolate*; he too must also choose between leaving and staying, obeying or disobeying. Marqués tells Conde that the transvestites of Paris had given him the idea that the characters in the play should also be cross-dressed or in disguise but rather than being carnivalesque, this disguise would represent the conscious adoption of another life: 'más verdadera por ser más deseada, conscientemente escogida y no asumida como simple ocultamiento coyunteral' (1997:166). As noted in the discussion of *Pasado perfecto,* the Sartrean notion that life is only made meaningful when the individual freely chooses his/her own actions is a central theme. In *Máscaras,* Sartre himself advises Marqués against presenting such ideas:

> Entonces Sartre, con esa vista de águila que siempre tuvo, se convirtió en mi oráculo: ¿No es demasiado complejo lo que te propones?, empezó por preguntar, para decirme que tuviera cuidado con las revelaciones, pues siempre proponen diversas lecturas y esa diversidad podía ser peligrosa para mí, igual de una Electra cubana del siglo veinte: ya había oído decir a ciertos burócratas insulares que el arte en Cuba debía ser otra cosa y esa otra cosa no se parecía a mi *Electra Garrigó* y su disyuntiva de ser o no ser...(1997:166)

As mentioned in Chapter 3 Sartre defended the poet Heberto Padilla and as a result became a figure of scorn in Cuba being labelled a 'pseudo-leftist' whose position favoured the interests of the imperialists. Undoubtedly, Sartre's individualist philosophy would be unpopular among Marxists and at the time in which this scene is set, the early 1970s, the Soviet influence, bureaucracy and control referred to by the Sartre character in *Máscaras* was increasing. Thus Marqués, like Diego, is targeted both because he is gay and because his art is considered to be counter-revolutionary. Essentially, Sartre's criticism to Marqués in *Máscaras* implies that what is not required in Cuba is an art that

challenges the audience to choose, but rather an art that requires or induces them to obey. This conflict is a major preoccupation in the film *Fresa y chocolate*, although Marqués, unlike Diego, does not leave Cuba but stays and accepts his marginalisation in the knowledge that one day he would be vindicated. Marqués is portrayed as much more of a victim of a vindictive and ignorant bureaucracy than the author of his own demise.

Fresa y chocolate

Diego gets into trouble with the authorities because he challenges their banning of Germán's art exhibition. This is explicitly revealed in the scene after Nancy returns home from the hospital to find Diego in an agitated state. She asks him what's the matter and he tells her the news:

> Diego: Con estos estúpidos tenemos que estar callados. No puedes discutir con ellos porque ellos mandan todo. Sólo aceptan pintores naif, oficiales o esos que dicen que son modernos pero en el fondo no son nada. Son pura decoración. (Quoted from the film).

This criticism of the Cuban bureaucracy is followed by his admission:

> Diego: Pero no piensas que me quedé callado.
> Nancy: ¿Qué dijiste?
> Diego: Lo que me dio la gana. Que en socialismo no hay libertad, que los burócratas controlan todo que...
> Nancy: ¡No dices cosas así sin música, Diego! (Quoted from the film).

Thus Diego is shown to be an enemy of bureaucratic socialism which lacks the ability to distinguish good art from bad. He writes this in a letter to the authorities after he learns that Germán has been 'bought' with a trip to Mexico. It is this letter which finally gets Diego suspended from his job and forces him to leave the country. Diego's problem is not so much that he is gay but that he refuses to give in to the bureaucracy. Any doubts about that are dispelled by the case of Germán. He is not as strong as Diego and gives in and, although he is gay, is recompensed with a trip to Mexico. Germán tells Diego that he should be 'realistic' that two or three pieces of art are not worth all the

trouble. There is little doubt that it is Diego's stubbornness and authenticity that loses him his livelihood.

Diego explains his views to Nancy:

> Mire, mi corazón, entiende que el arte no es para trasmitir, es para sentir y pensar. ¡Que trasmite la radio nacional! (Quoted from the film).

And to David:

> ¿Cuándo van a comprender que el arte es una cosa y propaganda es otra? (Quoted from the film).[6]

Diego clearly disagrees with revolutionary cultural policy in his refusal to allow art to be used as a propaganda tool by the state. The art in question is a series of religious statues, apparently pastiches of the kind found in Roman Catholic churches. One of them depicts Karl Marx as Christ, complete with a crown of thorns and a sacred heart. It is this statue which Germán smashes in his rage when he and Diego argue. Such a depiction of Karl Marx prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union would surely have been censored. Thus implicit in Diego's attitude is a challenge to the state. He counterpoises a conception of artistic 'freedom of expression' with the socialist realist notion that art must serve the ideology of the revolution.

As noted in Chapter 3, this debate between the view of art as a vehicle of ideology and the view that ideas are the wellspring of art has a long history in the revolution and goes back as far as 1960 with the conflicts that arose surrounding the newspaper *Revolución* and its literary supplement *Lunes de Revolución.*[7] The history of culture in the Cuban revolution, as Antoni Kapcia among others have shown, has been one which has reflected the confrontation between these two positions.[8] The Cuban author Lisandro Otero, in his essay *Literature and Revolution* (1988) argues the revolution's case for demanding that its artists conform to a role of supporting the revolution against

its enemies. Pointing out that contradictions between art and society are typical only of capitalist societies and 'should not exist under socialism', he continues:

> A writer... has no need to enter into contradiction with the socialist state if he analyses and understands the reasons for and the purposes of that state's actions and if that state acts with justice. (1988:65)

The issue of homosexuality, perhaps because it is clear case in which the revolutionary state acted unjustly, has been a cause of rebellion and disaffection among sectors of the Cuban artistic community. The question is how and why this disaffection came about. Both *Fresa y chocolate* and *Máscaras* offer explanations.

Diego, in *Fresa y chocolate,* is obviously an advocate of the bourgeois point of view, namely, the freedom to express oneself independently. He is against the unifying (and what he sees as stultifying) dogma of Marxist-Leninism. While defending himself against David's charge that he is not revolutionary, he explains how he became disaffected:

> Yo también tuve ilusiones, David. Cuando tuve catorce años me fui a alfabetizar. Porque yo quise fui para las lomas a recoger café, y estudiar para maestro. ¿Y qué pasó? Que esta cabeza es una cabeza pensante, y el que no dice sí a todo o que tiene ideas diferentes lo quieren apartar.(Quoted from the film).

Here, Diego expresses his anti-Marxist-Leninist attitudes. He demands the right to the freedom of expression within a revolution that demands that the artist give up his individual freedoms in the interest of building a new society based on collective ideas and responsibility. It is important here to bear in mind that the fact that Diego is gay is, theoretically at least, irrelevant. A heterosexual could make exactly the same criticisms and, indeed, in practice many have done so and have been marginalised for it. Heberto Padilla and Guillermo Cabrera Infante are not gay.[9] Thus the film is not merely a plea for

sexual tolerance but also a criticism of the mistakes the revolution has made in the field of cultural policy.

An explanation is required as to why a gay is the vehicle for such criticism in *Fresa y chocolate*. A clue is provided in Diego's adoration of José Lezama Lima, Cuba's distinguished poet and author of the novel *Paradiso*, a masterpiece which, it is widely understood, was deliberately shunned by the revolutionary establishment because it contains explicitly homosexual scenes. As stated previously, not all intellectual dissidents were gay and equally not all gays were dissidents, but the fact is that some celebrated dissidents like Reinaldo Arenas (see below) were gay and several other prominent gay intellectuals, such as Virgilio Piñera and Antón Arrufat, did suffer from discrimination. Lezama Lima was one of those whose careers and lives were ruined by the kind of bureaucracy Diego criticises in the film.

Máscaras is in many respects so similar to *Fresa y chocolate* in theme, plot and characterisation, that it is almost inconceivable this was unintentional. At the start of *Máscaras*, Conde, describes himself as a '*macho-Stalinista*' who hates '*maricones*'. He thus resembles David in *Fresa y chocolate* who is at first disgusted by Diego's effeminate approaches. Conde is upset that he has to engage with a homosexual in order to investigate the case of a murdered transvestite and even more so when the gay in question is the intellectual, Alberto Marqués. Marqués is described in the police file Conde reads as follows:

> ...homosexual de vasta experiencia depredadora, apático político y desviado ideológico, ser conflictivo y provocador, extranjerizante, hermético, culterano, posible consumidor de marihuana y otras drogas, protector de maricones escarriados, hombre de dudosa filiación filosófica, lleno de prejuicios pequeñoburgueses y clasistas [...]

Conde makes the observation that the files are:

> [...] anotados y clasificados con la indudable ayuda de un muscovita manual de técnicas y procedimientos del realismo socialista.(1997:28)

This obvious linkage between homosexuality and petit-bourgeois counter-revolutionary ideology echoes the kind of associations that David's friend Miguel makes about Diego. Significant here is the reference to the Soviet manual and socialist realism, influences that are implicitly rejected by both narratives. Both are anxious to foreground the adoption of Soviet methods as an error which has led to injustices, and assume a connection between these Soviet methods and homophobia. Brad Epps (1995) notes how the former Soviet Union under Stalin criminalised male homosexuality and suggests strongly that Cuba's embrace of soviet ideology necessarily implied an adoption of this aspect of repression. Allen Young (1981) and Paul Julian Smith (1996) see the revolution's treatment of gays as entirely due to the adoption of Stalinism, although others such as Ian Lumsden (1996) and Marvin Leiner (1994) stress other factors, notably the individual activity of homophobes in positions of authority, Hispanic machismo, and North American influences, particularly in the field of psychology and the application of neo-Freudian theories of child rearing popular in the 1950s.[10]

Unfortunately, the way these critics explain the revolution's repression of homosexuality appears to depend largely upon their own individual political preferences and/or sexual orientation. These discourses share the trait of viewing the matter from a dualist perspective, pro- or anti- Castro. Reading *Fresa y chocolate* and *Máscaras* as fictional treatises of the same subject, one is immediately struck by the absence of the figure of Fidel Castro. There is only the most oblique reference to him in either narrative. This ambiguity towards the most ubiquitous figure in Cuban life is indicative of the limits still imposed on the freedom of expression, since any hint that *he* might

have been to blame would surely result in censure. Yet, at the same time this limitation is not without its advantages since the matter is openly discussed.

Máscaras

Like Diego, Marqués is a victim of the state apparatus. The victim of an anti-homosexual and anti-intellectual witch-hunt, he has been condemned to obscurity and salacious rumours abounded about his personal life, some of which are related to Conde by his friend Miki. Conde embarks on his investigation with his own anti-homosexual and 'Stalinist' prejudices reinforced, only to have them gradually removed by his contact with the dramatist. Thus, the narrative of *Máscaras* is as much the progressive revelation of the real identity of Marqués as it is about the unmasking of the murderer. Just as David changes his views as he gets to know Diego, so too does Conde through his contact with Marqués. Conde's transformation is more profound than David's. Thus, provoked by the arguments of his gay interlocutor, Conde recalls the feral nature of his own childhood sexuality in which he and friends initiated themselves on goats and pigs before graduating to sharing the pleasures of Luisito, an effeminate boy in the neighbourhood. The curious, paradoxical and ultimately hypocritical nature of Cuban machista sexuality is explained:

> [...] el Conde llegó a saber que algunos de los que apedreaban [a Luisito] y lo vituperaban en público, ciertas noches propicias habían tenido la segunda escala de su iniciación sexual en el culo promiscuo de Luisito: depués de experimentar con las chivas y las puercas, habían probado el boquete oscuro de Luisito, [...] Y como ninguno de ellos admitió jamás que también hubiera besos y caricies complementarias para elevar las temperaturas (tu ves: eso sí es mariconería, se argumentaba con seriedad cuando se hablaba del caso), para todos los que lo hicieron, la relación con Luisito había sido aceptada como una prueba de hombría alcanzada a punta del ene... Luisito sí, ellos no: como si la homosexualidad sólo se definiera por una aceptación de la carne ajena similar a la recepción femenina. (1997: 76)

Luisito, after suffering the disdain of being effeminate and gay, eventually escaped Cuba in the Mariel boatlift of 1980 only to resurface again in a photograph brought back by a friend showing him as a transexual in Miami. Padura Fuentes is clearly sensitive to the story of Reinaldo Arenas, Cuba's most celebrated and contentious gay writer, whose ostentatious sexuality scandalised Cuba and resulted in imprisonment, exile and ultimately suicide. In his autobiography, *Antes que anochezca* (1992), published posthumously, Arenas relates his own childhood experiences that are not dissimilar to those recalled here. After his early problems with the revolutionary authorities explained in Chapter 3, Arenas also left Cuba in the Mariel boatlift and never ceased in his opposition to Fidel Castro. Epps (1995) discusses at length the significance of this, suggesting that Castro might have been Arenas's ultimate macho object of desire. Padura Fuentes suggests inversion here, namely that Cuban homophobia is a violent rejection of the 'otherness' implicit in the male Cubans' macho sexuality which accepts and then denies sexual love between men. Arenas was especially sensitive to the fact that the most Cuban machos were invariably the best lovers since they penetrated him as if he were a woman.

Arenas points out that Cuban homophobia is not directed against the macho (active) homosexual male but against the effeminate partner, that is, towards those who exhibit their homosexuality. It is thus a prejudice based upon appearances, hence *máscaras*: the masquerade. There is a moment in *Fresa y chocolate* when Diego draws attention to this fact and puts on a macho voice in order to make the point that if he talked like that all the time he would not be persecuted. Epps draws attention to the fact that the Unidades Militares de Apoyo a la Producción (UMAP) work camps, where homosexuals were sent during the period 1965-7 were intended to 'make men' of effeminate gays by instilling military macho behaviour patterns in them and building them

up through physical work. Both *Máscaras* and *Fresa y chocolate* make reference to these camps. In the latter case, it is revealed that the revolutionary singer and song-writer, Pablo Milanés, was sent to one of them. In *Máscaras* the reference comes when Marqués gives Conde a lesson in the history of homosexuality in Cuba in order to explain why Alexis, the victim, was suicidal. He takes the view that the Spaniards should share the blame with the Stalinists but he does not spare the current regime, underlining the difficulty of being openly gay in socialist Cuba,

> [...] hay muchísima gente incapaz de confesar que es homosexual, y es lógico, por lo que le dije antes y por la larga historia nacional de homofobia que hemos vivido entre las cuatro paredes de esta isla desde que llegaron los españoles y les pareció cochino y bárbaro lo que hacían nuestros inditos sodomitas mientras se bañaban en apacibles riachuelos con un tabaco en la boca y una yuca en la mano... La experiencia de la vida histórica le puede agregar otros conflictos al drama, policía amigo mío: no olvide que en los años sesenta hubo aquí mismo algo que se llamó UMAP [...], donde confinaban, entre otros seres dañinos, a los homosexuales, para que se hicieran hombres cortando caña y recogiendo café y que, después de 1971, se dictó una ordenanza, otra vez aquí mismo, para que los policías como usted y los fiscales y los jueces la cumplieran, donde se legislaba jurídicamente sobre el "homosexualismo ostensible y otras conductas socialmente reprobables"... ¿Y usted es tan ingenuo que todavía puede preguntarse por qué un homosexual llega a pensar en el sucidio? (1997: 164)

Note the adjective 'ostensible' indicating the crime is to *show* one's sexual difference rather than to *be* different.

After frequent visits to Marqués's house and lessons such as these, Conde works through the emotions surrounding his own experience of censorship at Pre-university college. He begins to write again. Like David, who presents his work to Diego, Conde shows his work to Marqués, and both of them grow as a result of their friendship with these dissidents. Padura is clearly deliberately imitating the Senel Paz story *El bosque, el lobo y el hombre nuevo* (1991). In *Máscaras*, Padura provides the reader with a literal

forest, El Bosque de la Habana, where the transvestite is murdered. In the character of Conde appears the 'new man' as he emerges at the end of the novel and the wolf is Faustino Arayán, the unreformed macho father who kills his own son for fear of being exposed as a fraud.

Criticisms of cultural policy

The novel does much more than repeat the motifs of *Fresa y chocolate*. *Máscaras*, as the extract above shows, differs significantly from the film in that it deals more explicitly with what happened to gays and intellectuals in revolutionary Cuba and in that sense reads more as a rendering of accounts and a settling of scores than *Fresa y chocolate* which, in comparison, only broached the subject. Padura Fuentes is demanding openness, suggesting not only that the sins of the past be aired but also atoned for. This is evident from the more clearly defined temporality in the novel and the fact that the central gay character and his friends are more obviously based upon various identifiable personalities from Cuba's cultural past.

While it is commonly accepted that *Fresa y chocolate* is set in the 1970s, there are contradictory elements in the film which make the fixing of a definite time frame difficult. For example, the frequent shots of collapsed buildings in the streets of Old Havana and the scene where a pig is being carried up a staircase to be slaughtered are more reminiscent of the present day hardships of the so-called Special Period. They contrast with the bountiful tables set by Diego that definitely belong to another period, perhaps the mid-eighties. David's clothes, on the other hand evoke an earlier time, his flared jeans suggest the early 1970s. The only two scenes in the film which render clear temporal markers set the action after certain dates but leave it open as to exactly when it might have taken place. The first, when Diego and David meet, is the book by Mario

Vargas Llosa, *Conversación en la catedral*, which Diego shows David.[11] This book was published 1969, placing the action after that date. The book in Paz's original short story is *La Guerra del fin del mundo* published in 1981, *after* the Mariel boatlift in which it is widely assumed Diego must have left. Later in the film, a documentary about the fall of the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza which occurred in 1978, is showing on TV. The documentary clearly refers to the Nicaraguan revolution as taking place six months earlier. This would place the action of the film sometime after the winter of 1978 or spring 1979. This inability to fix the story precisely in time has led Jorge Yglesias (1994) to suggest that this was a deliberate strategy on the part of Alea so that the film could not possibly be read as a representation of real people or a real incident:

> Por lo contrario. Los personajes del filme operan sobre ese tiempo gracias a una estrategia artística que hace formar parte al acontecer histórico de una ficción que pretende modificarlo, aliviar sus heridas con una reivindicación virtual. (1994:39)

The *mise en scène* of *Fresa y chocolate* is arguably not Cuba as it really is or ever was at a particular moment, but at the same time it is clearly a virtual version of Cuba as it might exist in the collective consciousness of Cubans themselves. This notion is supported by Diego's flat, where most of the film's action takes place, which is cluttered with Cuban iconography spanning at least a century. The confused temporality also means that the character Diego can not be identified as any single known case of a dissident but is a purely representational character. He is older than David and through his knowledge of Lezama Lima and Lecuona, his syncretic beliefs, and his posters of Marilyn Monroe he harks back to a pre-revolutionary age. Diego also owns an abundance of fine things, *Sèvres* china, a record player, banned books, US magazines, and a large apartment apparently to himself, all of which point to an archetypal 'bourgeois' lifestyle. Thus he represents that *Cubanidad* which is urban, educated,

intellectual, anti-Batistiano and yet non-Communist, and therefore marginalized after the declaration of Socialism in April 1961.[12] Lezama Lima himself was a member of this social grouping, as were other prominent gay writers Virgilio Piñera, Antón Arrufat, Calvert Casey, Severo Sarduy and José Rodríguez Feo all of whom suffered either exile or internal silencing later on.

Severo Sarduy wrote a considerable body of work on the subject of make-up and bodily disguise, tattoos, transvestism and such simulations from which Padura Fuentes draws heavily. In *Máscaras,* Marqués hands Conde a book written by his friend Recio called *El rostro y la máscara,* a treatise on the subject of disguise which might well have been written by Sarduy. As Sarduy lived in Paris after leaving Cuba in 1960 and Marqués knew Recio there, we can only conclude that Padura Fuentes intends us to understand that Recio is indeed Sarduy. Interestingly, Epps notes that for Sarduy, inscription and incorporation are inseparable:

> [...] so much so that the body is scripted in terms of play and performance. Of course play, performance and bodily scripts are not always, if indeed ever, left to the individual. Social and historical scripts invariably collect and often entrap the individual body. What results is an insoluble tension between freedom and coercion , autonomy and automation, between the scripting and the scripted of the body. (1995:245)

These binary oppositions are a major preoccupation of both the works under consideration. In addition both heavily reference the theme of exile and regret. Padura Fuentes's paraphrasing of Sarduy and, in the film, the use of the songs *Adiós a Cuba* and *Ilusiones perdidas* by Ignacio Cervantes the nineteenth-century composer exiled by the Spanish, all allude to the desire to recover 'lost' figures for the nation. Significantly *Fresa y chocolate* includes a reference to John Donne, whose poem *Meditation XVIII* is about collective responsibility. Diego echoes the words of the poem when he reprimands David about his homophobia:

> Diego: Yo formo parte de este país aunque no le guste y tengo derecho de hacer cosas por él. ¡ De aquí no me voy! ¡Que me den candela por el culo! ¡Sin mi coño le faltará un pedazo de la tierra! ¡Comemierda! (Quoted from the film).

Donne's poem prefaces and provides the title for Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1926) and is yet another reference to Cuba's historical cultural landscape since Hemingway, who lived in Cuba for many years, is a national icon. The poem reads in part:

> No man is an island entire of itself: every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea Europe is the less as well as if a promontory were. (1973:1624)

Fresa y chocolate makes the point that Cuba and the revolution are very much the less for having lost the contribution of figures such as Diego. Into Diego's den of *Cubanidad* at one point David introduces the symbol of the July 26th Movement and a picture of Che Guevara saying that they form part of the national culture too, yet they seem small and insignificant among the items that surround them implying that the revolution is only a late addition and relatively insignificant.

It is important to note that Diego's age makes him at least adolescent in 1959 (we know he went on the literacy campaign of 1961) whereas David is younger and obviously of a generation that grew into cogniscence afterwards. At the start of the film David typifies the kind of dogmatic militancy which knows nothing more than what the Marxist-Leninist textbooks tell him. Also, while he has a rich knowledge of political theory we learn that he knows nothing about Lezama Lima and the great pianist and composer Ernesto Lecuona. His friend Miguel, (whose character holds the key to understanding the film) epitomizes this type of militant whose dogmatism verges on the obsessive. He tells David that the 'revolución no está metido por el culo' thus declaring his homophobia. Yet, in the shower scene, the only potentially homo-erotic scene in the

film, it is insinuated that he himself is gay in the way he gives David a playful slap on his buttocks.[13] The impression is that Miguel, the 'straight' militant is perhaps vehemently homophobic because he is repressing his own homo-erotic desires and for all his ideological purity, is quite ruthless. If he is an archetype, like the other characters, he represents that aspect of Cuban society which is consciously hidden from public view. In the end, Diego confronts Miguel and tells him that David 'es mucho más hombre que tú,' hinting at Miguel's repressed homosexuality and possible attraction to David. David is thus torn, as it were, between two lovers. He has to choose between the free expression and open homosexuality espoused by Diego and the repressed, homophobic revolutionary zeal of Miguel. He favours the former because it seems the healthier of the two. Diego as an out-of-the-closet gay does not wear a mask, whereas Miguel does.

It is noteworthy that David becomes disgusted with himself when he begins to spy on Diego, at one point staring at his reflection and asking himself if he too was becoming 'a hijo de puta'. Later in the film, after David has deliberately avoided Diego in the bookshop, Diego admonishes him referencing the fact that it was impossible because of societal pressures for him to be 'seen' out with a gay. The incident recalls the episode in the novel *La ronda de las rubíes* discussed in Chapter 6, where the detective is too embarrassed to ask after a known gay suspect for fear that people might think he, too is gay. In that novel the gay was 'counter-revolutionary' but the difference in the treatment of these characters is marked. Diego is sympathetically viewed unlike the caricatured gays in 1970s detective fiction. The characters David, Diego and Miguel function as representation of fundamental dichotomies that existed between artists and homosexuals on the one hand and the revolution on the other. Senel Paz and the film directors, Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío, succeed in creating an allegorical world in which such a debate could be presented without upsetting too many sensibilities in the

revolutionary establishment. Western critics, without exact knowledge of this history, can be forgiven for not realising the full significance of this film in opening up a debate about a particularly shameful part of the revolution's past, a debate which Padura Fuentes has taken further with his novel *Máscaras*.

Whereas *Fresa y chocolate* merely broached the subject of homosexuality and the repression of intellectuals in guarded terms, *Máscaras*, coming afterwards, is able to explore it more deeply and more explicitly. There are no ambiguities about the time frame in *Máscaras*. We know the action of the novel takes place in one week in the August of 1989. From this vantage point, we are given glimpses of the past through the reminiscences of Conde and the stories of Alberto Marqués. Conde's recollections of his youth and childhood can be placed with certainty because we are told at one point that he is 34 years old. If he was born in 1955, his cogniscent existence coincides with that of the revolution itself. By contrast, the stories of Marqués are all dated from his time in Paris (Spring of 1969) to his ordeal in what he calls 'el año terrible de 1971' (1997: 222).

Thus Conde is given an oral history lesson about events which would have occurred during his youth. In Marqués's explanation of how he was removed from his job, he paraphrases the words of the declaration of The First Congress of Education and Culture (April 1971). He describes how four bureaucrats came to his theatre and made a mock trial on the stage:

> La primera acusación que me hicieron fue la de ser un homosexual que exhibía su condición, y advirtieron que para ellos estaba claro el carácter antisocial y patológico del homosexualismo y que debía quedar más claro aún el acuerdo ya tomado de rechazar y no admitir esas manifestaciones de blandenguería ni su propagación en una sociedad como la nuestra.(1997:107)

These words are a gloss on the actual words of the final declaration of the Congress:

> Respecto a las desviaciones homosexuales se definió su carácter de patología social. Quedó claro el principio militante de rechazar y no admitir en forma alguna estas manifestaciones. (1971: 13)

In *Máscaras* Marqués continues:

> Que ellos estaban facultados para impedir que la "calidad artística" (y me insistieron en que el que hablaba abrió y cerró comillas, mientras sonreía), sirviera de pretexto para hacer circular impunemente ciertas ideas y modas que corrompían a nuestra abnegada juventud. (1997: 107)

The Congress declaration states:

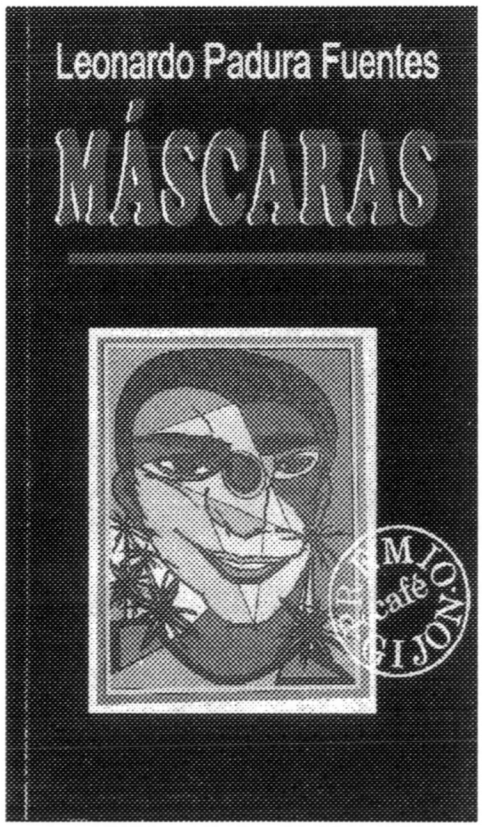
> En el tratamiento del aspecto del homosexualismo la Comisión llegó a la conclusión de que no es permisible que por medio de la "calidad artistica" [sic] reconocidos homosexuales ganen influencia que indica la formación de nuestra juventud.(1971:14)

Marqués continues:

> Y que tampoco se permitiría que reconocidos homosexuales como yo tuvieran alguna influencia sobre la formación de nuestra juventud y por eso se iba a analizar (dijo "cuidadosamente", las comillas ahora son mías) la presencia de los homosexuales en los organismos culturales, y que se reubicaría a todos los que no debían tener contacto alguno con la juventud y que no se les permitiría salir del país en delegaciones que representaran el arte cubano, porque no éramos ni podíamos ser los verdaderos representantes del arte cubano.(1997:107)

The congress declaration concludes:

> Que como consecuencia de lo anterior se precisa un análisis para determinar cómo debe abordarse la presencia de homosexuales en distintos organismos del frente cultural.
> Se sugirió el estudio para la aplicación de medidas que permitan la ubicación en otros organismos, de aquellos que siendo homosexuales no deben tener relación directa en la formación de nuestra juventud desde una actividad artística o cultural.
> Que se debe evitar que ostenten una representación artística de nuestro país en el extranjero personas cuya moral no responda al prestigio de nuestra revolución. (1971:14)



Above: The 1997 edition of *Máscaras* by Tusquets, Barcelona. Below: The Ediciones Unión edition published in Cuba in the same year.

In this way, the 1971 Congress of Education and Culture targeted both intellectuals as possible counter-revolutionaries and homosexuals as undesirables. It therefore institutionalized homophobia so that if you happened to be both homosexual and an intellectual, you would become the target for a witch hunt. What Marqués is describing is part of a purge of Cuban cultural life which the leading Cuban film critic Reynaldo González (1993) describes it this way:

> La marginación apelaba a "parametros" morales y de confiabilidad sancionados por un llamado Congreso de Educación y Cultura (inicios de 1971) que devino amargo recuerdo para los intelectuales cubanos. La purga conmovió desde las aulas universitarias a las oficinas públicas relacionadas con la educación y la cultura.
> El asunto se implicó con resortes políticos y ganó significación hasta marcar drásticamente el movimiento intelectual en su conjunto. El teatro cubano, que tenía un nivel envidiable para los países latinoamericanos y debía su auge al patrocinio del gobierno, todavía no se recupera de los efectos de aquella política, pese a los esfuerzos y la mejor voluntad de la administración cultural actual.(1993:6)

Unlike Diego in *Fresa y chocolate* who deserts Cuba, in *Máscaras* Marqués is sent to work in a library in the Havana suburb of Marianao. It is noteworthy that this actually occurred to the playwright and critic Antón Arrufat. Today, Arrufat is enjoying a revival and rehabilitation on the island. In an essay published in Cuba in 1994 he describes what life was like for himself and Virgilio Piñera during the 1970s:

> En los anos del sesenta, calificados por Piñera de muerte civil, la burocracia de la década nos había configurado en esa 'extraña latitud' del ser: la muerte en vida. Nos impuso que muriéramos como escritores y continuáramos viviendo como disciplinados ciudadanos. Dar muerte al ser que nos otorgaba la escritura y existir con el que otorgaba el Estado, exigencia casi metafisica en una sociedad que se poponía el materialismo, era imposible de cumplir. Tras la orden, la burocracia, dando por hecho esta imposibilidad, tomó las necesarias medidas estatales para llevarla a la práctica. Nuestros libros dejaron de publicarse, los publicados fueron recogidos de las librerías y subrepticiamente retirados de los estantes de las bibliotecas públicas. Las piezas teatrales que habíamos escrito desaparecieron de los escenarios. Nuestros nombres dejaron de pronunciarse en conferencias y clases universitarias, se borraron de las antologías y de las historias de la

> literatura cubanas compuestas en esa década funesta. No sólo estábamos muertos en vida: parecíamos no haber nacido ni haber escrito nunca. Las nuevas generaciones fueron educadas en el desprecio a cuanto habíamos hecho o en su ignorancia. Fuimos sacados de nuestros empleos y enviados a trabajar donde nadie nos conociera, en bibliotecas alejadas de la ciudad, imprentas de textos escolares y fundaciones de acero. Piñera se convirtió por decisión de un funcionario, en un traductor de literatura africana de lengua francesa. (1994:21)

In his interview with Verity Smith (1996) Padura admits that the Marqués character represents these people. Like Diego and Marqués, Piñera, Rodríguez Feo and Arrufat were all writing during the pre-revolutionary era. Piñera and Rodríguez Feo were associated with Lezama Lima and his journal *Orígenes* during the 1940s before Piñera left for Buenos Aries and Rodríguez Feo split from the group to form his own highly irreverent journal *Ciclón.* (In *Máscaras* we learn how Marqués also split from a character referred to as 'el Gordo,' who we can only assume is based on Lezama Lima as he was a famously fat man). Thus, like Diego, Marqués represents the kind of *Cubanidad* which has everything to do with *criollismo* and nothing to do with revolutionary socialism. He explains this to Conde in respect to his production of *Electra Garrigó.*

Piñera's play is now considered a masterpiece of Cuban theatre. Written in 1941, before Sartre's *Les Mouches* (also a parody of the Electra myth), Piñera's play uses Cuban language and cultural motifs (Piñera is credited with having rediscovered the man who wrote the melody of *La Guantanamera,* popularised through its use in this play).[14] Piñera was also a personal friend of Sartre and was on the editorial board of *Lunes de Revolución* who invited Sartre to Cuba in 1960 and whose publishing arm, Ediciones R, published the French philosopher's diary of his visit that same year.[15] In *Máscaras,* Marqués tells Conde how he met Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in Paris and explained his plan to them:

> Toda la noche hablamos de mi proyecto, les comenté cómo imaginaba el escenario y los vesturarios, y sobre todo la gestualidad que quería imponer a los actores, maquillándolos como máscaras griegas pero con caras muy habaneras, de blancos, mulatos y negros habaneros, tratando de que la máscara los mostrara y no los ocultara, que los revelara interiormente y no velara esa espiritualidad trágica y a la vez burlesca que quería buscar como esencia de una cubanía en la que Virgilio Piñera fungía como máximo profeta, porque para él, si algo nos distinguía del resto del mundo, era poseer esa sabiduría criolla de que nada es verdaderamente doloroso o absolutamente placentero.(1997:134)

Padura Fuentes is here paraphrasing Piñera's introduction to the 1960 edition of his *Teatro Completo,* where he indicates that in the programme notes to the 1948 premier of *Electra Garrigó* he had written:

> Los personages de mi tragedia oscilan perpetuamente entre un lenguaje altisonante y un humorismo y banalidad, que entre otras razones, se ha utilizado para equilibrar y limitar tanto lo doloroso como lo placentero, según ese saludable principio de que no existe nada verdaderamente doloroso o absolutamente placentero. (1960: 9)

In the 1960 introduction, Piñera expands on his view of the schizophrenic nature of *Cubanidad.* On the one hand, the Cuban people have a serious, stoical ability to bear enormous hardship and injustice but at the same time they also have a propensity to bear their burdens through the use of humour. This combination produces the Cuban national character:

> [...] yo vivía en una Cuba existencialista por defecto y absurda por exceso. Por ahí corre un chiste que dice: "Ionesco se acercaba a las costas cubanas, y sólo de verlas, dijo: aquí, no tengo nada que hacer, esta gente es mas absurda que mi teatro..." Entonces, si así es, yo soy absurdo y existencialista, pero a la cubana. (1960: 15)

What is significant (apart from his description of himself as existentialist, see below) is the theme of the search for a national cultural identity. Clearly Piñera was not a Marxist and belonged to a Cuban tradition of resistance to Batista that could not agree with the turn towards Marxist-Leninist dogma that the revolution eventually took.

Antoni Kapcia has written extensively on this. Before the revolution there were two clearly definable strands within the intelligentsia, one characterised by a political search for ideology and the other a search for a Cuban identity:

> The essence of the argument, therefore, is the permanent existence of two parallel strands: a political search for ideology, articulation and identity, that preceded and followed 1959; and a literary search for an individual and collective identity.(1982:63)

Piñera was part of the latter. Kapcia points out how this political-literary dichotomy, already evident before 1959, became critical after the initial stages of the revolution and resulted in conflict:

> Conflict developed between these two vanguards, with the revolutionary élite, steeled in the *lucha*, always closer to events, clearer of objectives, roles and needs, and the literary élite, increasingly disorientated in a process that was radicalizing itself ahead of, and without, them. Formed in a pre-revolutionary cultural *milieu*, in a Western intellectual tradition, the latter found it increasingly difficult to adjust and to identify, and the question of literature's role in the revolution became a matter of considerable debate, with the writers unused, even, to the concept of a 'role' itself. (1982:70)

Piñera, Arrufat, Lezama Lima, Rodríguez Feo, all homosexuals, all belonged to that literary élite. The only one to make the adjustment was Rodríguez Feo, the others were all victims of the post 1971 purge and had problems with the guardians of revolutionary culture prior to that. Arrufat, for example, was dismissed from his job as editor of the *Casas de las Américas* literary review in 1964 for having published an explicitly homo-erotic poem by the theatre director José Triana (himself *parametrizado* later). Arrufat was also heavily criticised for his play *Siete contra Tebas* (1968) which was interpreted as an attack upon Fidel and Raúl Castro[16]. Piñera was a member of the editorial team of *Lunes de Revolución* and a friend of its editor Cabrera Infante. As described in Chapter 3, after *Lunes* was closed down in 1961, Cabrera Infante became increasingly estranged from the revolution until he finally left Cuba and is one of Castro's most ardent critics.

His writing for the known CIA publication *Mundo nuevo* condemned Cabrera Infante as a *persona non grata* in Cuba and no doubt Piñera suffered guilt by association with him.[17] Piñera was also an anti-Communist who before the revolution had published an anti-Communist farce, *Los siervos,* significantly not included in his *Teatro Completo* of 1960.[18] Piñera's play *Dos viejos panicos* which won the Casa de las Américas prize in 1968 was attacked as an absurdist, and therefore a bourgeois decadent, creation. But apart from artistic and ideological differences, Piñera was also the victim of an arrest during a 1960 round-up of homosexuals, pimps and prostitutes in Havana. According to Cabrera Infante he was victimized because his neighbours denounced him as 'immoral' to the police. According to Reinaldo Arenas, Piñera suffered because of his obviously effeminate manner.[19] Lezama Lima, due to his more 'macho' appearance and demeanour, and because he married, suffered less. By the same token however, Lezama Lima was much less outspoken in his criticisms of the system and kept a lower profile.[20]

Both *Fresa y chocolate* and *Máscaras* strongly suggest that the way in which the revolution treated these intellectuals was an error and damaged the revolution itself.

In *Máscaras,* the inquisitorial team who put Marqués on trial turn out to be opportunists, as was the functionary Morín in *Pasado perfecto.* Marqués comments that the one who led the trial:

> ...ahora es un notable perestroiko y solicitante de la glasnost como necesidad social. ¿Qué le parece ese cambio de máscara? (1997:109).

The blame for what happened to him is laid firmly on individuals who, he says, were:

> ..Los policías por cuenta propia, los comisarios voluntarios, los persiguidores espontáneos, los delatores sin sueldo, los jueces por afición, todos esos que se creen dueños de la vida, del destino y hasta de la pureza moral, cultural y hasta histórica de un país... Esos fueron los que quisieron acabar con gentes como yo y como el pobre Virgilio...(1997:105)

Here we return to Padura Fuentes's recurrent criticism of the unscrupulous careerist who espouses the correct dogma for personal advancement. Such people embody sham and pretence. As in *Pasado perfecto,* the failure of the revolution is attributed to those selfish enough to misuse their power for their own ends. In *Máscaras* we learn that Alexis, the transvestite, was murdered by his own father, Faustino, because Alexis was threatening to expose him as a fraud. Alexis in turn provokes his father into the act of murder by dressing up as a woman and fooling him into thinking he really is a woman. Alexis is found dead in a lovers' lane. The inference is that Faustino was doubly enraged when he sees that he has been fooled by his own son whom he in any case despises for being gay. Thus Alexis, by provoking his father to murder him actually succeeds in 'killing' him. It is a curious and paradoxical reworking of the Electra myth.

Before the revolution, Faustino had already been a diplomat but kept his job after 1959 because he had been able to present documentation to prove that he had secretly supported the *anti-Batistiano* struggle. Alexis, however, discovers that his father had really falsified these documents and he was *pro-Batistiano.* Thus Faustino's main motive to kill his son is fear of exposure. A final twist is added to the story when Marqués reveals to Conde that Faustino was the diplomat in Paris during the 1960s who had denounced him to the authorities after a scandal involving a homosexual friend. This friend, known only to the reader as el Otro Muchacho, later recants and informs on his acquaintances and is currently a prominent figure. Faustino is therefore not only a betrayer of the revolution but also a homophobic who uses the homophobia of the revolution to further his own career. El Otro Muchacho betrays even his fellow homosexuals to keep his position. Such hypocrisy stands in contrast to Marqués, the victimized sincere homosexual who has suffered the loss of a career directly through the actions of people like Faustino and El Otro Muchacho. Against this bleak background,

however, *Máscaras* does hold out the hope of salvation. Ironically, this is through art, the very art that the dogmatists were trying to suppress.

In *Máscaras* we learn that the homosexual purge lasted until 1975 when a group of marginalised artists won a case for compensation and reinstatement in the Cuban Supreme Court.[21] As noted in Chapter 3, the Declaration of the Congress was finally quashed in 1976 when the Ministry of Culture was formed under Armando Hart Dávalos and a more liberal cultural policy was instituted. Marqués did not return to his theatre because he was so disillusioned he wanted a full apology from the State. Conde thinks this is a great pity until the end of the novel when, after recounting the final chapter of his own life-story, Marqués shows Conde the work he has been engaged upon during his years of public silence. He points out that his public face is only an adopted character, as in a play, but another of his selves, the actor, was always there hidden:

> Por lo que le dije antes: mi personaje el actor ha hecho que lo que debía hacer, y por eso seguí escribiendo, porque, como Milton, un día van a recordar al escritor y nadie será capaz de mencionar al triste funcionario que lo hostilizó. No me dejaron publicar ni dirigir, pero nadie me podía impedir que escribiera y que pensara. Estas dos carpetas son mi mejor venganza. ¿Me entiende ahora? (1997:226).

Milton was imprisoned for a while because of his anti-Royalist writings, but *Paradise Lost* also functions as an ironic reference to the revolution in this context. The message is clear: the inquisitors and hypocrites are destined for oblivion whereas the artist will live on through his works. Once again, the reference is to Sartre who, shortly before he died, explained to Simone de Beauvoir, how he believed that literature bestowed immortality upon its creators:

> When I originally wrote 'Pour un Papillion (For a Butterfly) I wrote something absolute. I created something absolute which was, in short, myself. I carried myself over into everlasting life. An artistic creation outlasts mundane things and therefore I, the author that it embodies, I outlast mundane things. Behind this there was the

> Christian idea of immortality – I passed from mortal to immortal life. (1981:152-53)

Thus Conde realises this power of literature. He is holding a story of his own in his hand and thinks to himself that it did not matter if he publishes it or not: 'Marqués tenía razón: en aquellos ocho cuartillas estaba lo invencible.' (1997:226)

I shall return to Conde's story in the next chapter. Marqués's reaction to it is interesting; a character in the story reminds him of Mr Meursault in Camus's *The Outsider*. Marqués enquires about the story's title and, in response to Conde's indecision, suggests *'La muerte en el alma'*, adding : 'Total, es de Sartre...' Thus existentialism is reintroduced. Marqués remarks:

> -Es curioso volver a leer cuentos así... En otra época seguramente lo huberia acusado de asumir posturas estéticas de carácter burgués y antimarxista. (1997:219)

Marqués goes on to give the story the kind of reading he imagines would have been appropriate in the 1970s. It is reminiscent the school principal's reading (See Chapter 8)

> [...] no hay explicación lógica ni dialéctica al irracionalismo de sus personajes ni de su anécdota; es evidente la incapacidad de estas criaturas para explicarla desorganización de la vida humana, mientras que el detallismo naturalista del narrador no hace más que reforzar la desolación del hombre que ha recibido, no se sabe de dónde, una iluminación de su existencia. Tal estética, pudiera decirse entonces (como muchas veces se dijo), no es más que un reflejo de la degeneración espiritual de la burguesía moderna. Además, su obra no ofrece soluciones a las coyunturas sociales que planea, por no decir lo que es más evidente: que transmite una imagen sórdida del hombre en una sociedad como nuestra.(1997:219)

As Diego said in *Fresa y chocolate*; 'arte no es para trasmitir'. That art or, in this particular case, literature, should not be a vehicle for propaganda is the argument that Padura Fuentes makes repeatedly. As Marqués remarks:

> Pobre existencialismo...¿Y qué hacemos entonces con esas obras tan horriblemente bellas de Camus y de Sartre y de Simone?...¿Y el pobre Scott Fitzgerald y el escatológico Henry Miller y los buenos

> personajes de Carpentier, y el mundo oscuro de Onetti? ¿Decapitar la historia de la cultura y de las incertidumbres del hombre?...(1997: 219)

Dogmatism not only mutilated culture it also tried to do away with uncertainty. The conclusion is that uncertainty like sexuality is a fact of human life that cannot be eradicated. This once again points to the crisis in modernity that lies at the heart of Padura Fuentes's work. In the next chapter, I shall discuss this theme of postmodernity in the novels.

Conde's act of writing and the approval it meets from Marqués reinforces his own quest for identity. He realises he is an author. In effect, he has done what Sartre himself prescribed as the only course of action open to human beings; he has committed himself to meaningful action; he is *engagé*. Throughout the Conde series this sub-theme has continually resurfaced. Conde's existential problems rooted in his past, his regrets about past decisions, his confusion about how he became a policeman and about whether he could ever make amends, are dispelled through his contact with Marqués. In the final paragraph of the story Conde says to himself:

> ¿Será posible volver atrás y desfacer entuertos y errores y equivocaciones? No es posible, Conde, aunque todavía puedes ser invencible. (1997:233)

Thus he has become aware that his past is now facticity, frozen and unchangeable, but that the future can be shaped if he commits his present actions to writing. The act of writing itself makes him invincible.

At the end of the book, in an author's note, Padura apologises for having used the words of others without quotation marks, and adds that Conde 'es una metáfora'. Like David, it would be safe to assume that Conde is a metaphor for his generation which, through the discovery of the truth about the revolution, has been forced into (self) reappraisal. Conde's conclusion like David's embrace of Diego at the end of *Fresa y*

chocolate, is an optimistic acceptance that it is never too late to start again. As David is forced to admit in *Fresa y chocolate* and as Conde realizes here, the question is not to forget the past but to accept it and move on.

Notes

[1] For a critical appraisal from a gay perspective see Paul Julian Smith *Vision Machines* (1996) and his 'The Language of Strawberry,' *Sight and Sound* 4 (1994: 6-10). Smith argues that the film uses stereotypes and frames the action within 'a hetero narrative which safely contains it for straights.' Smith faults the film for lacking a convincing moral in that it reduces sexual differences to a matter of 'taste' i.e. some us prefer strawberries and others chocolate, without explaining why it was that those who preferred the former were sent to work camps. For a critique of Smith's approach see the author's article, 'Behind the screen and into the Closet: Reading Homosexuality in the Cuban Revolution through *Conducta impropia, Antes que anochezca* and *Fresa y chocolate*' in Domínguez ed. (2000)

[2] Much of the chapter is drawn from research carried out for my article: 'Homosexuality and the Repression of Intellectuals in Fresa y chocolate and Máscaras' in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* (18, 1:17-33).

[3] For Paz's description of his childhood and education see his interviews with Emilio Bejel in *Escribir en Cuba* (1991) and Peter Bush trans., *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1995).

[4] The term liberal 'West' is understood to mean those developed countries which display a liberal capitalist economy and electoral political structure. This necessarily implies a predominantly capitalist market economy and a political system based upon multi-party elections in which the freedom of speech, assembly and association are customary. In effect what are here referred to are most of the countries of western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada.

[5] See for example LeClerq (1994:46) who suggests it is Diego's homosexuality that means he is 'excluded from the regime'

[6] Eagleton (1976: 57) remarks that the works of politically motivated figures such as Bertolt Brecht and others 'stand as a living denial of bourgeois criticism's smug assumption that art is one thing and propaganda another.' Indeed, *Fresa y chocolate*, as other Alea films, is itself undeniably propaganda at the same time as being unquestionably of high aesthetic quality.

[7] An interesting and ironic fact is that it was the group of artists on *Lunes de Revolución*, including Piñera, who invited Sartre to Cuba in 1960 (see later in this Chapter).

[8] Antoni Kapcia (1982) and Jose Antonio Portuondo (1979), the Cuban Marxist literary critic, have both charted this conflict.

[9] Neither Guillermo Cabrera Infante nor Heberto Padilla, the two most celebrated exiled writers who have denounced Cuba's cultural policy are homosexuals. However, they both make criticisms of the revolutionary cultural policy similar to Diego's. See for example Cabrera Infante's 'Respuesta a Padilla' (1969) and Heberto Padilla (1988: 160-63).

[10] See for example Leiner (1994: 37-59).

[11] Mario Vargas Llosa, *Conversación en la catedral* (Barcelona, Seix Barral, S.A., 1969).

[12] After the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, Fidel Castro declared that the revolution was to be Marxist Leninist from that point on. Until then it was still expected by liberal bourgeois supporters of the revolution that there would be elections in Cuba. It was shortly after this time that the conflicts over cultural freedom began to emerge. The controversy over the film *PM* in that year, led to the celebrated discussions on cultural freedom in the national library which culminated in Fidel's *Palabras a los intelectuales.* See Chapter 3.

[13] In the original screenplay translated into English by Peter Bush, two scenes are included in which Miguel is further depicted as a possible closet gay which were not included in the finished film. In these scenes Miguel entices Germán into a sexual advance in the toilets at the National Ballet and then blackmails him with the threat of public denunciation. To buy Miguel off, Germán gives Miguel his wallet. Miguel is thus not only a possibly repressed homosexual but a thief as well. The so-called revolutionary is shown to stoop to entrapment and outright dishonesty. When Miguel returns to his seat alongside David he says; 'When we get out of here, I'll take you out for a restaurant meal' (1995: 144). See Senel Paz *Strawberry and chocolate*, Peter Bush trans. (1996: 140-45).

[14] Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1994: 342) reports that during the 1961 staging of *Electra Garrigó*, Piñera was sitting between Sartre and De Beauvoir. In *Máscaras*, Marqués is a friend of Sartre. As one of the European intellectuals who protested at the imprisonment of Padilla and accused the revolution of 'Stalinist tactics', Sartre, after a brief honeymoon with Castro, became completely out of favour. Sartre's books were banned in Cuba for many years.

[15] See *Sartre visita a Cuba* (1960).

[16] A campaign against Piñera and Arrufat was carried out in the armed forces' magazine *Verde Olivo* in articles written under the pseudonym Leopoldo Avila. Lourdes Casal (1971) suggests this might have been the Communist critic José Antonio Portuondo but no one can be sure. See Avila (1968) for attacks on Piñera and Arrufat.

[17] See Weiss (1973: 60-62) for a discussion of the CIA-*Mundo nuevo* connection and Stoner-Saunders (1999) for the CIA's funding of arts in general.

[18] See Montes Huidobro (1973:163).

[19] See ReinaldoArenas (1992: 105).

[20] This difference is important. According to Arenas, Piñera was a *loca* meaning that he was a passive gay and took the part of the woman in the sexual act. Lezama Lima on the other hand was *macho* meaning that he took the male active part. As Lumsden (1996: 29-30) and indeed Conde in *Máscaras* point out, the former is much more deprecated in Cuba than the latter. Heterosexuals often indulge in active homosexual intercourse but would not regard themselves as homosexuals.

[21] See Lumsden (1996:77).

Chapter 10

From existentialism to postmodernity: The aesthetic of doubt in the Conde novels with particular reference to *Vientos de cuaresma* and *Paisaje de otoño*

> — ¿Qué tú escribes?
> — ¿Yo? Pues cuentos
> — Que interesante. ¿Y eres posmoderno?
> El Conde miró a la muchacha, sorprendido por aquella disyuntiva estética imprevista: ¿debía ser posmoderno?
> —Más o menos —dijo, confiando en la posmodernidad y en que ella no le preguntara cuánto más y cuánto menos.
>
> (Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Máscaras*: Tusquets, Barcelona, 1997: 141)

In *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) Jean-François Lyotard, argues that postmodernity is characterised by a crisis in the status of knowledge in Western societies expressed as 'incredulity towards metanarratives' and 'the obsolescence of the metanarrative of legitimation'. (1984: xxiv). As noted in Chapter 7, he discusses in detail the problem of the legitimation of knowledge in the face of a collapse of what he calls the *grands récits* or metanarratives which have been used in the past to justify the quest for knowledge and the importance of science. He defines two main metanarratives. In the first, the narrative of emancipation, the people are the subjects of scientific endeavour. Thus it is argued that science will eventually lead to the greater well-being of the people and therefore must be justified. In the second narrative, knowledge itself in the form of philosophy is the subject. Here the pursuit of knowledge is carried out on the understanding that every advance, no matter how small, will add to the advancement of the totality of knowledge.

However, according to Lyotard, in the late twentieth century, neither of these two narratives is valid any longer. There has been a general breakdown of belief that a

unified totality of knowledge is possible or that, even if it were, that it might benefit humankind. Lyotard critiques the very idea of progress:

> One can note a sort of decay in the confidence [...] in the idea of progress. The idea of progress as possible, probable or necessary was rooted in the certainty that the development of the arts, technology, knowledge and liberty would be profitable to mankind as a whole. (1986:6)

Even wars and acts of repression were justified in the name of progress or human emancipation. However:

> After two centuries, we are more sensitive to signs that signify the contrary. Neither economic nor political liberalism, nor the various Marxisms, emerge from the sanguinary last two centuries free from the suspicion of crimes against mankind. (1986:6)

Lyotard notes a tendency towards the rejection of overarching and totalising thought. Marxism, Freudianism, and religions, for example, are called into question because they are all systems of thought that tend to universalise, justify and organise a plurality of experiences. According to Lyotard, such metanarratives operate to exclude and homogenise, to marshal heterogeneity into ordered realms either by silencing or excluding other discourses in the name of universal principles and general goals. Postmodernity is understood as the death knell of all such universalist metanarratives, characterised by their truth telling, and heralds an age when a plurality of voices from the margins will replace them with their insistence on difference, diversity and the claims of heterogeneity over homogeneity.

In Padura Fuentes's novel *Máscaras*, when the detective, Mario Conde, tells Poly that he is an author she asks him if he is 'posmoderno.' Apparently unsure exactly what she means, Conde replies: 'más o menos'. Such insecurity is itself a sign of the implicit postmodernity in Padura Fuentes's work. By referencing the condition in this way he is deliberately drawing the reader's attention to the overall nature of his project. He is

reminding us that the novel is a literary creation, a text that is itself composed of previous texts. This ironic referencing to postmodernity is an example of double-coding referred to by post-modern theorists like Charles Jencks and Umberto Eco, whom Jencks quotes at length in his essay *What is Post-Modernism?* (1996: 31). Their argument is that apart from heterogeneity, one of the characteristics of the postmodern attitude is the self-conscious use of previous forms, an acknowledgement of 'the already said':

> I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, 'I love you madly', because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly'. At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman; that he loves her; but he loves her in an age of lost innocence. If the woman goes along with this, she will have received a declaration of love all the same. Neither of the two speakers will feel innocent, both will have accepted the challenge of the past, of the already said which cannot be eliminated; both will consciously and with pleasure play the game of irony... Both will have succeeded, once again, in speaking of love. (Eco 1984: 67-68)

Jencks adds that: 'Futurists and Modernists declared war on memory and this led, ultimately to silence and the void. What else can one do, if memory is banished, but shut up?' (1996: 31). This recognition, on the part of the author, of the prior knowledge of the reader, underlines the importance of the past-shared experience. Padura Fuentes is saying, 'I know that you know that postmodernism exists'. Similarly, he acknowledges even the reader's awareness of who *he* (the author) is, as for example in *Vientos de cuaresma* when Conde opts to read a novel that he considers to be 'lo mejor que había leído en los últimos tiempos: *Fiebre de caballos'*. (1994:81) This is the title of Padura Fuentes's first novel published in 1988. Together, ironic double-coding and the acknowledgement of heterogeneity create the postmodern attitude. Thus there is a

tendency for postmodern literature to cut across literary genres and combine such separated types as the historical romance and the detective story. Postmodernity implies a willingness to cross barriers between modernist specialisations and to hybridise discourses. As Linda Hutcheon (1988: 3-22) has shown, postmodern literature inscribes itself within conventional discourses in order to subvert them. It incorporates cultural realities in order to challenge them: a double-coding strategy.

Padura Fuentes's fiction is profoundly postmodern in these two senses, that it celebrates pluralism and is heavily double-coded subverting both the traditional Cuban detective genre and hitherto established cultural and ideological discourses. At the party in which Conde meets Poly, Conde's gaze takes in the heterogeneity of the Havana gay scene. The humorous listing of the gay 'types' he sees at the party slowly gives way to a satirical listing of political, cultural and even literary critical tendencies, depicting a society composed of a multitudinous plurality, at complete variance with the homogenising tendencies of either the Marxist revolutionary project or the heterosexual orthodoxy which might see all homosexuals as the same:

> Y el Conde supo que aquella sala de La Habana Vieja había, como primera evidencia, hombres y mujeres, diferenciables además por ser: militantes del sexo libre, de la nostalgia y de partidos rojos, verdes y amarillos; ex dramaturgos sin obra y con obra, y escritores con ex libris nunca estampados; maricones de todas las categorías y filiaciones: locas - de carroza con luces y de la tendencia pervertida, gansitos sin suerte, cazadores expertos en presas de alta vuelo, bugarrones por cuenta propia de los que dan por culo a domicilio y van al campo si ponen caballo, almas desconsoladas sin consuelo y almas desconsoladas en busca de consuelo, sobadores clase A-1 con el hueco cosido por temor al sida, y hasta aprendices recién matriculados en la Escuela Superior Pedagógica del homosexualismo, cuyo jefe docente era el mismísimo tío Alquimio; ganadores de concursos de ballets, nacionales e internacionales; profetas del fin de los tiempos, la historia y la libreta de abastecimiento; nihilistas conversos al marxismo y marxistas convertidos en mierda; resentidos de todas las especies: sexuales, políticos, económicos, sicólogicos, sociales, culturales, deportivos y electrónicos; practicantes del budismo zen, el catolicismo, la

> brujería, el vudú, el islamismo, la santería y un mormón y dos judíos; un pelotero del equipo Industriales que batea y tira a las dos manos; admiradores de Pablo Milanés y enemigos de Silvio Rodríguez; expertos como oráculos que lo mismo sabían quién iba a ser el próximo Premio Nobel de Literatura como las intenciones secretas de Gorbachev, el último mancebo adoptado como sobrino por el Personaje Famoso de las Alturas, o el precio de la libra de café en Baracoa; solicitantes de visas temporales y definitivas; soñadores y soñadoras; hiperrealistas, abstractos y ex realistas socialistas que abjuraban de su pasado estético: un latinista: repatriados y patriotas; expulsados de todos los sitios de los que alguien es expulsable; un ciego que veía; desengañados y engañadores, oportunistas y filósofos, feministas y optimistas; lezamianos -en franca mayoría-, virgilianos, carpenterianos, martianos y un fan de Antón Arrufat; cubanos y extranjeros; cantantes de boleros; criadores de perros de pelea; alcohólicos, siquiátricos, reumáticos y dogmáticos; traficantes de dólares, fumadores y no fumadores; y un heterosexual machista-estalinista. (1997:143-144).

Lyotard argues that since science has lost its way 'the goal is no longer truth but performativity'(1986a: 6), idealism has given way to pragmatism. In this passage it is possible to see the shift away from idealism. This list of names, types and tendencies indicates that there is no political, ideological or cultural unity within this community. In stark contrast to the kind of world which characterises previous Cuban crime fiction, this is not a society divided between the loyal and disloyal. There is no uniformity of opinion about 'the revolution' nor indeed any explicit political rhetoric. What counts in the world of Padura Fuentes's novels is not the belief in the metanarrative of Marxism, the binary opposition between imperialism and the revolution or the certainty of a glorious future, but instead a realisation of the validity and importance of plurality, multiculturalism the individual's narrative. Padura Fuentes is concerned therefore with micro-politics rather than macro-politics. More important is the salvaging of the personal and subjective. As I have shown in Chapters 8 and 9, there is an absence of Marxist rhetoric in Padura Fuentes's novels in favour of satire, irony and parody. Conde, in a self-referential parody is the 'heterosexual machista-estalinista' and Fidel

Castro (the figure who above all else keeps the metanarrative of Marxism viable in Cuba) is not mentioned by name but is possibly 'el Personaje Famoso de las Alturas.'

It might be argued that a postmodernist reading of Padura Fuentes's fiction would be inappropriate because Cuba is not a highly developed capitalist society; that it would be wrong to apply to it a theory which is said to pertain to the condition of societies in the so-called stage of post-industrial, late twentieth-century capitalism (Hebdidge 1986). But if postmodernity is a result of the collapse of modernism, as evidenced by the apparent failure of Marxism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, then Cuba has experienced directly the very 'real' consequences of the kind of events which are said to have brought the postmodern condition about. Charles Jencks calls Communism 'modernity's greatest construction'(1996: 31). Post-1959 Cuba, with its rapid social, technical and educational development stands out in turn as one of Communism's greatest constructions. Despite its relatively low level of consumerism, Cuba is nonetheless a part of late twentieth-century history, and has been centrally placed in both the political and economic struggles that have characterised the epoch. Because it swapped a domination by the USA for a privileged position within the Soviet system in such a short time, Cuba is unique in that it has experienced the failures of both capitalism and Marxism in the time frame of less than a generation. In this sense, Cuba can be seen as a space in which the forces which brought postmodernity about (the collapse of modernity) have existed although the trappings of postmodernity (consumerist, late capitalism) have been less present.

It is important to note that Fidel Castro and the official media in Cuba still present progress as an achievable goal, while changes are taking place which challenge such an assumption. It is possible to 'read' post-Soviet Cuba as a battleground in which faith in modernity is being tested. Also, if the trajectory of the revolution is, as Lyotard would

call it a '*grand récit*' leading towards the creation a 'perfect' society, then to some extent, Cuba has been such a battlefield since the revolution began. The revolution, as a modernising and perfecting machine, has survived not merely against a real outside enemy but also against pessimistic and cynical attitudes from within, that see no hope for the island to emerge from underdevelopment in the face of such overwhelming odds. If, as Dick Hebdige (1986:85) writes: 'Postmodernity is modernity without the hopes and dreams that made modernity bearable' then it is true to say that what is happening in Cuba today is a struggle to maintain some belief, hopes and dreams. It is a struggle which the characters in Padura Fuentes's fiction seem to have lost, and exactly why they have lost their dreams is a major concern. It is for this reason that I suggest that Padura Fuentes is, as Conde says of himself 'more or less postmodern.'

Padura Fuentes's literary world is focused on the marginalised sectors of Cuban society. He is giving voices to characters who normally do not surface in the metanarrative of the revolution. We have seen how his first novel, *Pasado perfecto* had as its major theme the phenomenon of corruption. In the second, *Vientos de cuaresma*, Conde encounters the so-called 'friquis', Cuba's disaffected youth sub-culture. In the third, *Máscaras*, he is primarily concerned with homosexuality and the marginalisation of intellectuals, and in the last novel, *Paisaje de otoño*, he turns his attention to the most transgressive of the marginalised groups as far as the revolutionary project is concerned: the diaspora with its linked themes of betrayal and exile. Throughout the whole series, there is also an undercurrent of Catholicism, that of Conde himself and of other characters, such as the poet Eligio Riego (based upon the real person Eliseo Diego) or the art critic Juan Emilio Friguens, all of whom have suffered some form of discrimination.

In previous post-revolutionary Cuban detective fiction, almost all the novels and certainly all the radio, TV and film narratives served to reinforce the metanarrative of the revolutionary project. They presented an image of a society which embarked upon a historic mission of progress and they stressed the need for unity within the Cuban nation to resist the invasions, interference and destabilisation from outside. Detective fiction thus served a homogenising purpose, placing transgressive elements such as homosexuals outside the revolutionary project. In Padura Fuentes's fiction there is a conscious attempt to recognise the marginalised, understand the nature of their marginality and to incorporate them into the national 'dream'. This is nowhere more evident than in *Vientos de cuaresma* when Conde and Manolo encounter the 'friquis.'

Vientos de cuaresma

The phenomenon of the 'friquis' is a relatively recent development in Cuba. The emergence of this hippy-like sub-culture can be dated accurately to have taken place in the late 1980s. The slang dictionary, *El habla popular Cubano de hoy* (1985), compiled by Angel Santiesteban, published in 1985, makes no mention of the term, whereas Carlos Paz Pérez's *Diccionario cubano de términos populares y vulgares,* published nine years later, in 1994, defines 'friquis' thus:

> FRIQUIS (pop.) (ing.) s. Adolescentes que visten extravagantemente y sienten predilección por la música rock. Probablemente provenga del inglés *freakish* 'caprichoso' 'antojadizo', 'raro', 'extravagante'; aunque algunos afirman que estos grupos quienes, entre otras cosas, se proyectan por el amor libre, han adoptado el nombre de friquis aludiendo a la expresión inglesa *free kiss* 'beso libre'. (1994: 52)

The latter etymology is perhaps suspect as there is not an English expression 'free kiss', but it is indisputable that this fashion has an essentially foreign inspiration. Such

explanations also imply that the Cuban population, although poor and lacking consumer purchasing power, is intrinsically a part of Western culture and therefore not immune from its fashions and trends. One of the major fields of conflict within Padura Fuentes's fiction is the interface between Cuban society and culture with those of the 'West', with particular sensitivity towards the difficulties that this has created. However, there is also an awareness that there has been a change over time in the nature of this conflict. It is possible to detect a shift from what Conde perceives as one of optimism and acceptance to one of cynicism and resignation, if not rebellion. For example, in their youth, Conde and his friends secretly listened to 'forbidden' records by The Beatles and he and Flaco still bathe nostalgically in the sounds of Creedence Clearwater Revival. However, there is a repeated lament that things have changed since their youth. In *Vientos de cuaresma* when Conde visits his old high school he notices the change in the nature of the graffiti in the boys' toilets. The pleasure oriented slogans of his youth such as 'Yo quiero morirme singando: hasta por el culo pero singando' have given way to far more cerebral jokes like: '¿La pinga tiene ideología?' (1993: 42). Later, Conde remarks on the changes to his friend Flaco:

> Pero yo creo que éramos más inocentes y estos de ahora son más bichos. Nos encantaba el lío de tener el pelo largo y oir música como benditos, pero nos dijeran tantas veces que teníamos una responsibilidad histórica que llegamos a asumirla y todo el mundo sabía que debía cumplirla, ¿no? No había hippies ni estos friquis de ahora. (1993: 64).

Flaco replies that there were no hippies in their day 'porque los fumigaron' (1993: 64), a clear reference to the way in which the authorities clamped down upon such fashions. Conde's friend Andrés suggests that it is not youth but the times that have changed:

> —No éramos tan distintos, Conde [...] Las cosas eran distintas, eso sí, no sé si más románticas o menos pragmáticos, o a nosotros

> nos llevaban más recio, pero yo creo que al final la vida nos pasa por arriba a todos. A ellos y a nosotros. (1993: 64-65)

The times are now 'less romantic' and 'more pragmatic'. Later, Conde puts this idea to the test when he questions a group of 'friquis' he encounters by the sea. He asks the leader why they are 'friquis'. The answer is ironic and fundamentally opposed to engagement with the world. While using the language of politics it is apparent that the 'friquis' are eschewing social responsibility and duty:

> -Porque nos gusta. Cada cual es libre para ser lo que quiera, pelotero, cosmonauta, friqui o policía. A nosotros nos gusta ser friquis y vivir como nos da la gana. Eso no es delito hasta que se demuestre lo contrario ¿verdad? No nos metemos con nadie y no nos gusta que nadie se meta con nosotros. No le pedimos nada a nadie, no le quitamos nada a nadie y no nos gusta que nadie nos exija nada. ¿Eso es democrático, no le parece? (1993: 112).

Conde asks what they hope for from life. As he does so, he throws his cigarette out to sea, but, in an obviously symbolic way, it is blown back 'como demostrando la imposibilidad de una huída' (1993:112). Before the 'friqui' girl answers, Conde tries to imagine what her reply might be. In keeping with the burgeoning sensibilities we discussed in previous chapters, his views are essentially existentialist:

> Tal vez le contaría que la vida es algo que uno se encuentra sin haberlo pedido, en una época y en un lugar que son arbitrarios, con unos padres y unos familiares y hasta unos vecinos impuestos. La vida es una equivocación, y lo más triste es - pensaba el Conde que ella podría decir- que nadie puede cambiarla. Si acaso separarla de todo, ¿no?, decontaminarla de la familia, de la sociedad y del tiempo, hasta el último límite posible, y por eso eran friquis. (1993:112)

But in the event the girl says nothing of the kind. Conde's thoughts are really his own. This is the way *he* feels. As we have seen in preceding chapters, Conde suffers an existential angst as though he has been trapped by contingency. He feels frustrated by the fact that he is not living a life that he has chosen for himself. The girl has a far more

pragmatic vision than this, one that displays a total lack of faith in any 'metanarrative of legitimation':

> -¿Hay que esperar algo de la vida? [...] -Nosotros no esperamos nada de la vida [...] Vivirla y ya. (1993:112)

Conde's reply is that he thinks things are not that simple, yet one thing is clear, the 'friquis' have given up on ideology and the idealism of the revolution. As we have seen, Conde feels as though things were different once, sometime in his youth, but somewhere and somehow he lost his way and he is constantly recalling his past in order to make sense of it. Unlike the modernists, whom Jencks accuses of declaring 'war on memory' Padura Fuentes indulges it. This cloying nostalgia is therefore an important facet of Padura Fuentes's postmodernity, for Conde suffers a longing for past times which were not even his own. He is constantly in a state of confusion regarding the past. He is the 'cabrón recordador' who at times displays a 'learned nostalgia.'[1].

> [...] sabe que el alma profunda de la Habana se está transformado en algo opaco y sin matices que lo alarma como cualquier enfermedad incurable y siente una nostalgia aprendido por lo perdido que nunca llegó a conocer. (1993:87)

This nostalgia is the product of years absorbing Havana's pre-revolutionary past through the filter of media, books, records, films and TV. Conde longs for a past which he is too young to have experienced directly but which is as 'real' to him as if he had. He 'remembers':

> [...] los viejos bares de la Playa donde reinó el Chori con sus timbales, las barras del puerto donde una fauna ahora en extinción pasaba las horas tras un ron y junto una victrola cantando con mucho sentimiento los boleros de Benny, Vallejo y Vicentico Valdés, la vida disipada de los cabarets que cerraban al amanecer, cuando ya no se podía soportar un trago más de alcohol ni el dolor de la cabeza. Aquella Habana del cabaret Sans Souci, del Café Vista Alegre, de la Plaza del Mercado y las fondas de chinos, una ciudad desfachatada, a veces cursi y siempre melancólica en la distancia del recuerdo no vivido que ya no existía, como no existían las firmas inconfundibles que el Chori fue grabando con tiza por

> toda la ciudad, borradas por las lluvias y la desmemoria. Le gustó el Río Club para su encuentro difinitivo con Karina y lamenta que no haya un negro con frac al piano insistiendo en tocar "Según pasan los años". (1993: 87)

This invocation of 1940s Havana culminating in the reference to Dooley Wilson singing 'As time goes by' in Michael Curtiz's 1942 classic *Casablanca,* is a good example of the highly intertextualised nature of Padura Fuentes's writing. It also serves as an example calling to mind Jean Baudrillard's theories of postmodernity. For Baudrillard, postmodernity is not simply a culture of signs but a culture of simulacra.

A simulacrum is an identical copy without an original. Films, TV shows, records, are all examples of cultural artefacts which can be said to have 'no originals', they are all copies of each other. Baudrillard claims that this process of simulation has reached the point that now the distinction between all originals and their copies has been destroyed (1983: 1-30). Most people have seen the Mona Lisa although what most of us have seen is a picture of the original and not the original itself. This has produced a condition in which it is no longer possible or even necessary for there to be anything which might be said to be 'real'. We have become accustomed to a world in which simulation 'the generation of models of the real without origins in reality' has produced a state of 'hyperreality' (1983: 15). In this realm the distinction between the simulation and the 'real' implodes; the real and the 'imaginary' collapse into one another continually with the result that the imaginary and the real are experienced without difference. Simulations can therefore be experienced as the 'real thing'. Thus for Conde, 1940s Havana and the world of Hollywood cinema can become a remembered era, which he could never have really experienced, but for which he can feel a nostalgia in the realm of the hyperreal.

Paisaje de otoño

Another pertinent example of this occurs in the last book of the Conde series, *Paisaje de otoño,* when Conde goes to meet his new boss, Alberto Molina, for the first time. His boss tells him that he had not wished to be a policeman but had always dreamt of being a spy:

> Pero una espía de verdad, no como los de las novelas de John Le Carré, que parecen de verdad pero son de literatura. Yo quería infiltrarme en el ejército enemigo y hacer cosas heroicas, y escaparme en el último momento, cuando me fueran a capturar. Me parecía lo mejor de los destinos, y soñando con eso me pasé veinte años en una oficina, procesando lo que averigüaban los verdaderos espías: en fin, yo era el que parecía un personaje de Le Carré...(1998:14)

Here is a remarkable example of what Baudrillard calls the 'implosion' of the real and the imaginary. There is a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction, history and the representations of history. In the mind of Molina (named after the real Cuban author and friend of Padura), the spies of Le Carré are 'unrealistic'. Yet Le Carré's novels are generally accepted as examples of realism in contrast to the fantasy adventures of Ian Fleming's James Bond for example. By contrast, the kinds of spies which Molina describes as being *real* are in fact more akin to the heroes of *Boys Own* adventures and indeed previous Cuban detective fiction itself. The confusion becomes both ironically and comically complete when he admits that he has finished up resembling a character from Le Carré.

Molina's confusion, like Conde's, is the result of not being in charge of his own destiny. He tells Conde:

> Pero si uno se mete en este juego, enseguida aprende que está obligado a obedecer órdenes, teniente, y cuando a uno lo mandan, no queda más remedio que joderse y obedecer. Por eso ahora estoy aquí y no en Tel Aviv o en Nueva York [...](1998:14).

There are two kinds of people in Padura Fuentes's novels, those who obey orders and those who do not. The moral is that neither obedience nor disobedience brings fulfilment. Conde himself is caught on the edge between obedience and self-determination. He has been disciplined in the past for having broken the rules by sleeping with a suspect and for having fought in the street with a colleague. He also has two friends who represent the poles of the two extremes. This distinction is bought out more clearly in *Paisaje de otoño.*

There is Candito el Rojo, who is a petty criminal, and Andrés who is a leading surgeon. Candito is a 'drop-out' from college who makes a living from various illegal trades. Andrés was by contrast a model student and a star baseball player who married the best looking girl in their year and is now a surgeon who 'había recibido el privilegio de tener casa propia y auto particular' (1998:10). Conde is placed between these two extremes. Like Candito he has no domestic stability and has avoided the responsibilities that go with family life, but also like Andrés, he has a job very much within the establishment. The one thing that they all have in common is that they are discontent.

Andrés, very early in *Paisaje de otoño,* complains that the root of their problems is that they were a generation that said 'yes' to everything. He turns to Carlos 'el Flaco', who lost the use of his legs through being shot in the Angolan War, and says:

> ¿Tu no fuiste a la guerra de Angola porque te mandaron? ¿No te jodió la vida encaramado en esa silla de mierda por ser bueno y obedecer? ¿Alguna vez se te occurrió que podías decir que no ibas? Nos dijeron que históricamente nos tocaba obedecer y tú ni siquiera pensaste en negarte, Carlos, porque nos enseñaron a decir siempre que sí, que sí...(1998:10)

It is important to point out that the official Cuban view of the Angolan War is that all the soldiers who went to fight were volunteers.[2] Andrés's anxiety makes Conde think to himself that something has gone wrong in Andrés's life:

> Porque Andrés no era feliz, ni se sentía satisfecho de su vida y él se encargaba de que todos sus amigos lo supieran: algo en sus proyectos más intimos había fallado y su camino vital - como el todo de ellos - se había torcido por rumbos indeseables aunque ya trazados, sin el consentimiento de su invidualidad. (1998: 10)

The result of this outburst is a debate between the friends about the state of the world. Ironically Flaco, the one with the most to feel sorry about, has the most optimistic outlook. Flaco replies that although Andrés may be right, it is impossible to live thinking that way. When challenged to explain, Flaco says:

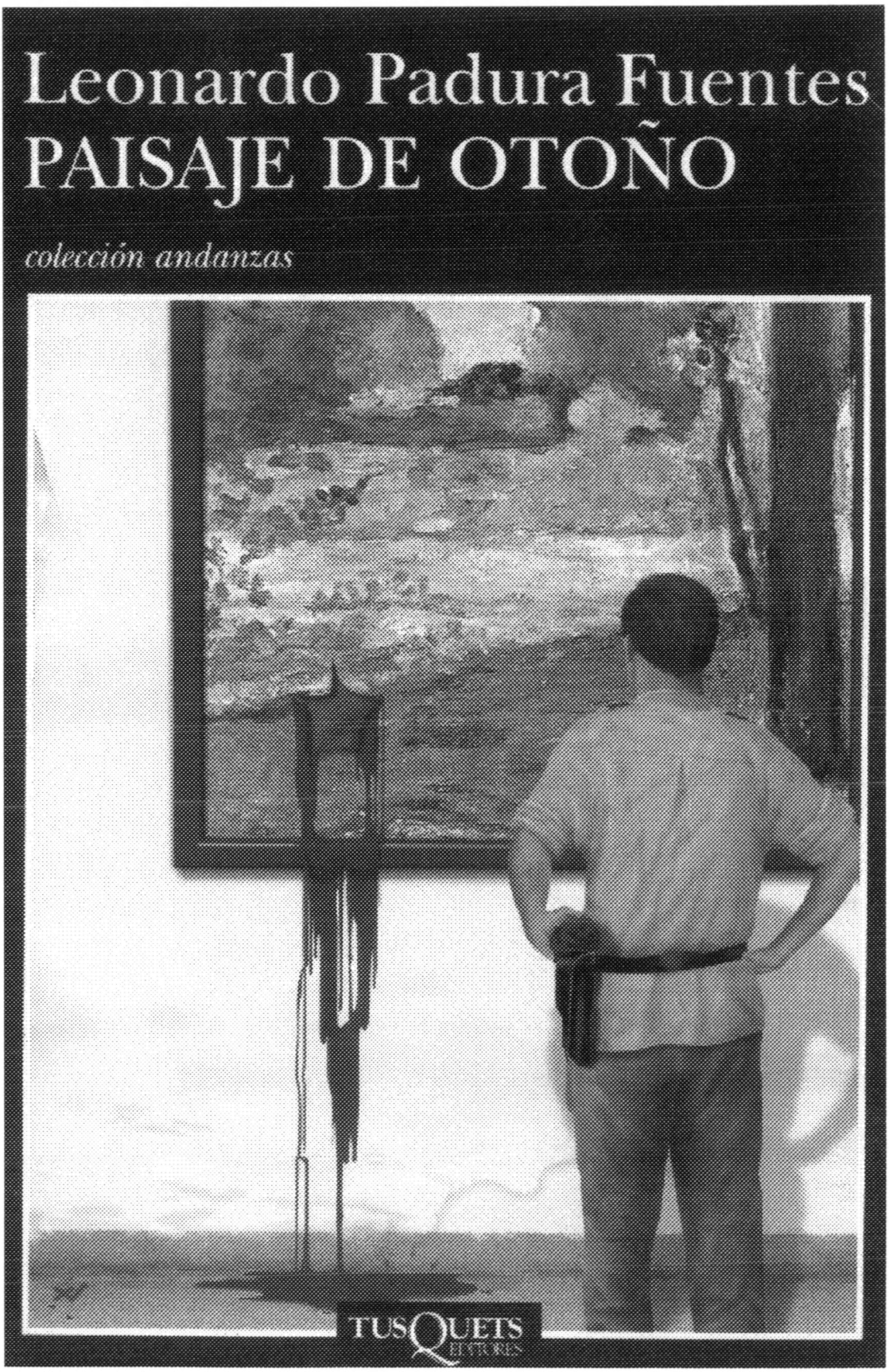
> -Porque entonces uno tiene que aceptar que todo es una mierda. (1998: 10)

Conde, by now quite drunk, disagrees,

> -Ahora sí se jodió el mundo y hasta la historia. (1998;10)

If the lives of these friends are read as a metaphor for that of the collectivity then the lives of Conde and his friends represent the revolution itself. Just as something went wrong in their pasts, that propelled them down a path not of their own choice, the revolution too, has been 'twisted' and 'sent the wrong way' by circumstances beyond the Cubans' control.

The existential message is thus underlined: choosing one's own path is the way to achieve fulfilment. As noted in Chapter Nine, Conde's preferred choice is writing and by the end of *Máscaras*, book three in the tetralogy, he has realised that this is his true vocation. At the beginning of *Paisaje de otoño*, in protest at the dismissal of his boss, Mayor Rangel, he resigns from the force only to be blackmailed back in order to investigate one last case. Molina, his new boss, agrees to give him an honourable discharge if he resolves this last case. Conde thus has to 'earn' his freedom.



The 1998 Tusquets (Barcelona) edition of *Paisaje de otoño.*

But the question is when and how did he lose his way? As discussed with reference to *Pasado perfecto,* or Conde and his friend Conejo were traumatised when they were censored in pre-university school for not writing in the 'correct' way. In *Máscaras* we saw how the persecution of homosexuals and the marginalisation of Catholics also created deep divisions and resentment. As we have established, these events can be placed around the early 1970s, with the 'sovietization' of the country and the onset of the *quinquenio gris.*

But perhaps the problems began before the *quinquenio gris.* In *Paisaje de otoño* Conde suffers a nostalgia attack while walking down La Rampa, the main avenue through the Vedado district of Havana which leads down to the sea. For Conde, La Rampa was the scene of his initiation into the ways of adolescence 'como lo había marado la Campaña de Alfabetización para los hermanos mayores.'(1998:32) His generation therefore had a somewhat less ideologically pure coming of age. He remembers how he and his friends would spend their afternoons on La Rampa looking at the adult world. In the passage that follows he remembers his early adolescence, when he was about 13 which, since we know he was born in 1953, would place the events he describes in the mid 1960s. He even refers directly to the UMAP camps where, as Flaco mentioned, along with homosexuals, hippies were 'fumigated'. He remembers how he and his friends spent their days walking up and down La Rampa practising a kind of 'Alpine walking':

> Y también practicaban aquel alpinismo citadino por obtener la visión fugaz de unos hippies tropicales, miméticos y condenados, alternada con los descubrimientos burlescos de aquellos maricones que se empeñaban en serlo y en demostrarlo, y por la golosa observación de las minifaldas recién llegadas en la isla, estrenadas precisamente en aquel plano inclinado por el cual parecían rodar todos los ríos de los nuevos tiempos: incluso los primeros rápidos a la intolerencia, de cuyos arrastres debieron huir también ellos, todavía tan jóvenes y correctos y estudiantes y deslumbrados,

> cuando se desataron las cacerías de mancebos emprendidas por las hordas de la corrección política-ideológica, armadas de tijeras dispuestas a devorar cualquier cabello que cayera más abajo de las orejas o a ensanchar pantalones por cuyos muslos no pudiera pasar un limón pequeño: triste recuerdo de tijeras y carros enjaulados para exorcisar una perniciosa penetración cultural. La política y el pelo, la conciencia y la moda, la ideología y el uso del culo, las Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción y sus rigores cuasi carcelarios como correctivo formador del hombre nuevo. (1998:32).

Padura Fuentes thus places the moments of disaffection precisely at those times when the revolution imposed conformity. The problems arise when the ideologues assert themselves dogmatically, when the authorities try to force society into a straight-jacket. This is the imposition of *'le gran récit'* as expressed by the 'metanarrative' of the 'correct' way to dress and behave. The contemplation of such events evokes in Conde a feeling of futility. He remembers when, almost exactly twenty years earlier, he first marvelled at the clubs and sights of La Rampa, but now, in 1989, things are very different. The neon signs are out, the clubs are closed, the Pavilion is faded, the pizzeria is boarded up and there is no longer any girlfriend to wait for outside 'la tienda Indochina donde ahora se vendían los que quizás fueran los últimos relojes soviéticos enviados desde un Moscú cada día más alejado y más inmune a las lágrimas' (1998:32). This makes Conde reflect on the notion that the twenty intervening years were in vain. He realises that his experience had been one of pointless struggle:

> Todo era excesivamente patético, pero a la vez escuálido y conmovedor, y en la evocación de aquella inocencia compacta de su propio florecimiento a la vida, el policía en funciones creyó encontrar algunas causas remotas de posteriores desengaños y frustraciones: la realidad no había resultado una cuestión de caprichosos y voluntarios ascensos y descensos inconscientemente alternados, con mares y helados en las metas, sino una lucha por subir y no bajar, por subir y seguir subiendo, por subir y quedarse arriba, por los siglos de los siglos, con una filosofía trepadora de la cual ellos habían sido excluidos, definitivamente relegados -Andrés volvía a tener razón - y condenados todos - o casi todos - al eterno

> ejercicio de Sísifo: subir para tener que bajar, bajar para tener que subir, ahora más viejos y más cansados[...]

According to Greek legend Sisyphus was condemned to push a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down again when he reached the top. Conde's passage into adolescence, like his passage into adulthood a few years later at pre-university school, was punctuated with disillusion. His struggle to 'stay up' shadows the efforts of Cuba as a nation to raise itself up from underdevelopment. The individual trajectory functions as an allegory for the collective experience. Cuba's efforts, like Conde's and his friends' have been frustrated. Paradoxically, it was the pursuit of the salvation offered by the Soviet system which lay behind the purges of the Western fashions of his youth and the intolerance of the 1970s and hence the distortion of the Cuban system. Neither brought the hoped-for salvation and ultimately, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba was condemned to go backwards in order to start again. This is due to a lack of memory. According to Marqués in *Máscaras*:

> [...] la falta de memoria es una de las cualidades sicólogicas de este país. Es su autodefensa y la defensa de mucha gente... Todo el mundo se olvida de todo y siempre se dice que se puede empezar de nuevo, y ya: está hecho el exorcismo. Si no hay memoria, no hay culpa, y si no hay culpa no hace falta siquiera el perdón , ¿ve cuál es la lógica? Y yo lo entiendo, claro que lo entiendo, porque esta isla tiene la misión histórica de estar recomenzando siempre[...] (1997: 111)

This anti-utopian idea of the future is one of the basic features which Hebdige (1986) argues characterises the postmodern condition. Hebdige emphasises that Lyotard's attack upon Marxism is based on a reflection upon Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and the origin of the philosophical underpinning of the Enlightenment, which, he writes, 'is defined as a twofold impetus towards universalisation (reason) and social engineering (revolution), both of which find support and legitimacy in the related doctrines of progress, social planning and historical 'necessity'(1986: 92). Lyotard discusses the

distinction between Kant's views of the twin orders of aesthetic experience: the beautiful and the sublime. The beautiful consists of the appreciation of artefacts that give aesthetic pleasure but which can be framed, contained and assimilated, whereas the sublime is used to describe those phenomena which defy logical containment, that invoke both pleasure and terror in the viewer. Lyotard argues that it is in the sublime where consciousness runs up against its limitations, meets face to face with death or infinity, and that it is this encounter where the spectator's, reader's or artist's subjectivity becomes predicated on an unliveable tense. Lyotard calls this the 'postmodern tense' or the 'future anterior', (hence 'post' meaning 'after', and 'modo' meaning 'now'). Hebdige comments:

> What Lyotard calls 'postmodernity' is similar to Paul de Man's (1983) a(nti)historical definition of 'modernity' as the perpetual present tense within which human beings have always lived at all times and in all places, pinioned forever between a disintegrating, irrecoverable, half-remembered past and an always uncertain future. (1986: 93).

It is precisely this predicament in which Padura Fuentes's characters find themselves. Furthermore, they exhibit the symptoms that characterise this strange condition. Lyotard calls it 'anamnesis'. Borrowed from psychoanalysis, this term means the compulsive or incessant re-encounter with a past trauma: not as a recovery of an original lost experience but rather as a recapitulation of an unforgettable one. At these sublime moments of trauma, the human subject comes up against the limitations of existence and becomes aware that 'complexity, difficulty and opacity are always there in the same place: *beyond our grasp*' (Hebdige 1986: 94. My italics). According to Lyotard, the 'palpability of human limitation' is nuanced politically at all moments when the attempt is made to implement the 'perfect (rational) system' or to create a 'perfect society' (1986a: 6).

As we have seen, Conde experiences just such recollections. He is tortured because he is unable to grasp the meaning of his life, and never more so than after such 'sublime' moments as the walk down La Rampa or the moment in which he was censored in pre-university school. These incidents haunt his memory, because they are the source of his nagging doubt about his own veracity which, as we have already seen, can be also read as doubts about the veracity of the revolution.

However, if this implies that Padura Fuentes's faith in Marxism is shaken, it does not mean that he finds hope in capitalism. He has been a frequent visitor to Miami during his career as a journalist for *La Gaceta de Cuba*. In *Paisaje de otoño* he provides an equally dystopian view of this 'Cuban alternative' to the Marxism of the island in the testimony of Miriam, the wife of the victim Miguel Forcade Mier. Her experience of Miami, as she recounts it to Conde, offers no viable alternative to the Sisyphusian torture of the islanders and describes the Miami Cubans as living in a similar state of 'anamnesis'. Miriam had been terribly homesick living in Miami with her husband, who had defected in 1978, and had become completely disillusioned shortly after seeing calle 8 for the first time. Calle 8 is the street in down-town Miami which is said to resemble Havana as it was in 1959: 'con un café en cada esquina, una victrola tocando boleros en cada bar, un juego de dominó en cada portal.'(1998:75) Like everyone else in Cuba, she had mythologised this street. However, calle 8 is a sham:

> Pero la calle 8 no es más que eso: una calle fabricada con la nostalgia de los de Miami y con los sueños de los que queremos ir a Miami. Es como las ruinas de un país que no existe ni existió, y lo que queda de él está enfermo de nostalgia y prosperidad, de odio y de olvido. (1998: 75)

That Miami is constructed from the nostalgia of those who left and the dreams of those who wish to go there means that it has no foundation whatsoever in the real of the now. It is thus a simulacrum, a virtual Havana, an imaginary space. Miami oscillates in

the kind of sublime present tense as described by Lyotard, this time between an over-sentimentalised past and an over-optimistic future. Miriam concludes that Miami is therefore nothing, 'Miami es nada' (1998: 76). It is a place whose reality does not match the illusion and is therefore part of the same hyperreality in which the Cubans of Padura Fuentes's books exist.

Instead of a busy, lively street, Miriam found in Miami desolation and loneliness: no bars, no singing, no dominoes in the doorways, but only three drunks shouting on the corner whom her husband described as 'Marielitos'.[3] Her husband, who had escaped Cuba and left a position in authority, had refused to use his knowledge of Cuba to help the anti-communists in Miami and had been excluded from the 'gravy-train'. He had had to work in menial jobs in order to survive, first as a hotel porter, then as toll-clerk on the freeway, eventually rising to a position with an import and export firm so their fortunes improved. But neither she nor her husband liked Miami. To them it was a strange parody of Cuba, but one in which its worst features were reversed:

> Aunque aquello esté lleno de cubanos, la gente ya no vive como vivían en Cuba y no se comportan como se comportaban en Cuba. Los que aquí no trabajan, allá nada más piensan en trabajar y en tener cosas: cada día una cosa nueva, sea cual sea, aunque tengan que matarse trabajando. Los que aquí eran ateos allá se vuelven religiosos y no se pierden una misa. Los que fueron comunistas militantes se transforman en anticomunistas más militantes todavía (1998: 77)

The result is what she calls the 'national tragedy', in which it seems that people do not really know where they are or what they truly want:

> [...] allá pasa algo parecido a lo que sucede desde acá con la imagen de Miami: allá la gente empieza a mitificar a Cuba, a imaginarla como un deseo, más que recordarla como una realidad, y viven en una media tinta que no lleva a ninguna parte: ni se deciden a olvidarse de Cuba ni a ser personas nuevas, en un país nuevo, y al final no son ni una cosa ni la otra, [...] Es una tragedia nacional, ¿no? (1998:77)

Miriam's crisis of identity is one that is shared by Conde and his friends. The national tragedy comprises an unfulfilled desire and a continual striving to be complete. By creating impossible goals, Cubans strive towards ends that can never be fulfilled. Thus they seem to be doomed to eternal strife and endless disappointment.

The Conde series of novels is concerned with how this 'national tragedy' is dealt with by Conde and his friends. They are each affected in different ways and respond differently. For example, Candito el Rojo, who lives in a Solar in Santa Suarez, Central Havana, and has made a living in a variety of illegal ways (from making and selling shoes to running an bar) surprises Conde in *Paisaje de otoño* by declaring that he has started to attend a Seventh Day Adventist Church. For Conde, who was brought up a Catholic and is an atheist by inclination, this is a worrying surprise. When he asks Candito why he has started to go to the church, Candito replies that he feels good there:

> -¿Cantando y dando palmadas? - indagó el Conde, incrédulo.
>
> -Sí, y oyendo a la gente hablar de amor, de paz, de bondad, de limpieza de espíritu, de esperanzas de salvación, de sosiego, de perdón... Oyendo decir lo que no se dice en la calle y dicho por gentes que creen en lo que dicen. Eso es mejor que vender cerveza o comprar piel robada para hacer zapatos, ¿o no? (1998:87)

Candito has substituted the metanarrative of the revolution for that of Seventh Day Adventism. He tells Conde that it is a comfort to think there is someone, somewhere:

> [...] que sólo te exige que tengas fe y que seas bueno. Mira, Mario, creo que estoy cansado de toda la mierda que hay...(1998:87)

In other words, the Church demands less from him than the revolution. What is more, in religion he fulfils his existential 'lack':

> Además, ya no me siento vacío, como antes, y ahora estoy aprendiendo que uno no puede vivir vacío toda la vida. (1998: 87)

Conde has felt the emptiness but is aware that Candito's belief is ultimately self-delusory. It is bad faith in the Sartrean sense. Conde cannot accept the doctrine of forgiveness that religion implies:

> -Hay cosas que no se pueden perdonar, y tú lo sabes...
>
> -Se puede, Conde, se puede.
>
> -Pues si es así me alegro por ti. Ojalá yo pudiera cambiar, querer y creer y hasta amar a todos los prójimos, incluidos los dos millones de hijos de puta que conozco. Lo que pasa es que no creo ni en mí mismo. Estoy descalificado. Y no quiero perdonar: ni cojones. (1998: 89)

Conde's declaration that he does not believe in himself is an indication of the extent of his self-doubt, but his refusal to forgive is also a sign that, unlike Candito, he has not entirely given up on the search for a satisfactory resolution. He has not withdrawn entirely from the 'real' exterior world. As if to underline this difference, Candito tells him:

> Lo que quiero cambiar son otras cosas que están aquí dentro - y se tocó la testa, de un rojo ya fileteado por las canas -, porque no puedo cambiar algunas que están allá fuera...(1998: 89)

Conde is involved with society as much as with the self. As a policeman he is in the business of effecting solutions and retribution. As he leaves, he sardonically asks Candito to ask his 'socio' (meaning Christ) to help him solve his case.

As we have seen, by solving this particular case, Conde will achieve salvation by being rewarded with permission to leave the police in order to dedicate himself to his real vocation of writing. But before he can write he has to completely purge himself of his past as a policeman. His release comes when he has solved the case and returned home. It is a particularly sublime moment in the Lyotardian sense because, as always, although satisfied by the result of having solved the case (pleasure) he has been sickened, and saddened in having had to share in the remorse and sorrow of the guilty and having had a

direct part to play in the downfall of a number of lives (terror). He takes a shower in an attempt to wash off what he calls the dirt of fear:

> [...] la certeza de que había asistido al derrumbe definitivo de varias vidas, le había puesto ante los ojos la más rotunda evidencia de por qué había sido incapaz de escribir aquella historia escuálida y conmovedora con la que soñaba desde hacía años: sus verdaderas urgencias andaban por otra parte, muy lejos de la belleza, y comprendió que debía vomitar primero sus frustraciones y sus odios para luego ser capaz- si lo era, si alguna vez lo había sido- de engendrar algo hermoso. (1998:225)

Writing something 'beautiful' is impossible given of the horror with which his existence is polluted. Instead, all he has is a story which is 'escualido y conmovedor'.

The repeating text

This phrase, which Conde incessantly repeats throughout the novels, is a direct reference to J D Salinger, in particular the anthology *For Esmé with Love and Squalor* (1986), which includes the story, *A Perfect day for Bananafish.* In this story, the significantly named character Seymour Glass, a soldier who has returned from the Second World War suffering from shell shock, finds himself in a marriage to a wife who is indifferent to his illness. On holiday by the sea, he befriends a young girl to whom he devotes an afternoon explaining the life cycle of the mythical 'Bananafish'. He appears jovial and pleasant with the girl, but on returning from the beach becomes agitated, lies down beside his sleeping wife and shoots himself. It is a carefully constructed story of only seven pages that works on the principle of pathos. The reader is made to sympathise with the soldier so that the suicide becomes all the more shocking and saddening. The reader is induced by the mystery to reread the story for clues to the reason why Seymour kills himself. There appears to be no 'grand scheme', no hidden meaning or solution. The act

is as arbitrary as Conde views life itself. This is why Conde is drawn to such sublime stories.

However, Seymour Glass appears in a series of Salinger's stories and it is possible to understand Glass's suicide in the light of a later story, *Raise High the Roof Beams Carpenters,* in which Seymour becomes afflicted with a strange illness that makes his skin yellow. William Weigard (in Bloom ed. 1987 5-17) argues that the illness is brought on by Seymour having too much contact with people. He is bloated by experience.

In *A Perfect Day for Bananafish,* Seymour describes the life-cycle of his mythical fish:

> "...Their habits are very peculiar... they lead a very tragic life... You know what they do Sybil?"
>
> She shook her head.
>
> "Well, they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas... Naturally after that, they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again"
>
> ... "What happens to them?"
>
> ... "Well, I hate to tell you, Sybil. They die."
>
> "Why?" asked Sybil
>
> "Well, they get banana fever. It's a terrible disease." (1986: 10-11)

Weigard associates the 'banana fever' and the 'lemon-yellow marks' from which Seymour suffers in *Carpenters* and concludes that Seymour is a kind of banana-fish himself who has 'become so glutted with sensation that he cannot swim out into society again.' (in Bloom ed.1987: 8). Similarly David D. Galloway (Bloom ed. 1987: 29-51) and James E. Miller Jr. (1965) suggest that Glass is over-sensitised to reality. He literally 'sees too much', hence his name 'See more Glass' (1986: 6).

In the immediate context of Padura Fuentes's first reference to Salinger at the end of *Pasado perfecto,* Conde has just unravelled the story of a Cuban 'big fish', Rafael Morín who became trapped by corruption and could not escape. But on another level, it is

Conde himself who is like Seymour Glass because he is also over-sensitised by experience. In his job he sees 'too much'. He too is trapped like a fish, like his pet fighting fish, Rufino, who swims around in circles in his bowl staring at the world through the glass. In the final book, Rufino dies, symbolically marking Conde's rebirth as a writer.

In *Máscaras,* Conde writes a short story about a bus-driver, who for seemingly an arbitrary reason kills a woman who regularly rides on his bus. This embedded narrative is the story Conde gives to Marqués (see Chapter 9), who describes it as existentialist. The atheistic, revolutionary bus driver suddenly feels the urge to murder the woman but cannot explain why. He is shaken by the contingency of the situation, he had changed his bus route three weeks earlier and, had he not done so, he would never have met her:

> *...y tal ves hubiera vivido toda su vida sin verla si, tres semanas atrás, durante la última escogida de los turnos de salida de la segunda mitad del año, no hubiera tomado la inesperada decisión - para él, para su esposa, para el resto de los guagueros -, de cambiar salida de la ruta 4 por 68, que empezaba dos minutos más temprano que su turno habitual, y terminaba tres minutos después , a la 1 y 27 de la tarde. Fue una decisión tan impensada como iribatible, a la que José Antonio trató de buscarle justificaciones*...(Author's italics 1997: 188)

This unexpected decision to change his route led to his fateful meeting. It is classic example of Sartre's *mauvais foi,* of attaching importance to destiny and failing to consciously choose. It is also typical of the way in which Salinger writes stories, bound up in ideas associated with Zen Buddism. James Lundquist (1979) takes this up in relation to Salinger's preface to his collection *For Esmé - with Love and Squalor* (first published in the US as *Nine stories)* with the paradoxical problem presented in the Zen Koan, by the teacher Hakuin:

> We know the sound of two hands clapping
> But what is the sound of one hand clapping?

(Salinger1986 frontispiece)

These paradoxical problems set for students of Zen are designed to remove their adherence to rational/abstract thought enabling them to achieve perfect consciousness, best described as the unself-consciousness of children. Hence Salinger's obsession with child characters. According to Lundquist, all these characters and their stories are puzzles, in the same vein as the Koans. They pose seemingly senseless conundrums which the reader has to answer. We are supposed to be perplexed by Seymour's suicide. The answer, according to Lundquist, is in a literary reference to T.S. Eliot's, *The Wasteland* (1940, Faber ed.1971), yet another meaning extracted from the world of texts.

When Seymour remarks: 'Ah Sharon Lipshutz [...] how that name comes up mixing memory and desire.' (1986: 9), Lundquist suggests this is a reference to the *Wasteland:*

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.
> (1970: 27)

The adult world is one composed of memory and desire, Lundquist argues whereas children have neither, thus the story is about the loss of innocence which growing up involves. Sybil, the little girl whose name literally means 'seer', can actually see the non-existent bananafish and keeps calling Seymour 'See more' as if he sees too much. This, according to Lundquist makes him entirely unsuited to his wife who he compares to the lifeless typist in Part III of *The Wasteland*:

> She turns and looks a moment in the glass
> Hardly aware of her departed lover
> (1970 :36)

Lundquist (1979:88) suggests that Seymour's wife Muriel is like the typist and that ultimately Seymour's suicide should be read as a protest against the dullness and superficiality of Muriel's world.

Paisaje de otoño refers us to Salinger in the hunt for meaning. Conde's story is a heavily coded message which must be deciphered. The reader asks why did Emilio Jorge the bus driver kill the woman? Or more exactly, why does Conde write such a story? The answer is because he reads Salinger and aspires to writing like him and it is also possible to read Emilio Jorge's action as a protest against his dull, predictable life. This intertextual layering of narratives within narratives, a story written by a character in a novel which is embedded in turn in the novel written by an author, is typically postmodern and, at the same time, existentialist.

In *Paisaje de otoño*, these motifs come together when Conde has his own 'moment of madness'. It happens when he realises that he has been afraid to leave the police and this fear has also prevented him and his friends from fulfilling themselves:

> La envergadura del miedo que le había impedido soltar sobre el papel, hacer real, vivo, independiente, y quizás hasta imperecedero, aquel río de lava podrida que había arrastrado su vida y la de sus amigos, hasta convertirlos en lo que eran: menos que nada, nada de nada, sólo la nada. (1998:225)

He looks in the mirror and does not recognise himself, but in order to overcome this he realises he must make a decision, he must choose to extirpate his past:

> No era su cara, que empezaba a cuartearse, ni su pelo que empezaba a escasearse, ni sus dientes que empezaban a mancharse: no era ninguno de aquellos comienzos de desenlaces previsibles, sino una sensación final ya concretado y una convicción dolorosa: sólo una decisión podía colocarlo en el sendero de la redención: o nos salvamos juntos o nos jodemos los dos: simplemente tenía que escribir, exprimir el grano, reventar al absceso, vaciar los intestinos, escupir aquella saliva amarga, ejecutar aquella operación radical, para empezar a ser él mismo. (1998: 226)

Conde makes up his mind to dedicate himself to writing, to writing about his friends, in particular Flaco and what he calls 'el amor entre los hombres'.

The following day, Andrés, the one friend who seemed to have the most well-adjusted revolutionary life, suddenly reveals that he has decided to leave Cuba. This revelation comes just at the moment that the hurricane, which has been looming throughout the novel, begins to break. Andrés explains that he is leaving because he feels he has been denied the right to choose his own path in life. Referring to the censorship of the story in high school he tells Conde:

> Lo peor es que si uno se pone a pensar, descubre cómo esa rutina empezó mucho antes, cuando otras gentes, otras necesidades, otras coyunturas decidieron que la vida de uno fuera una forma y no de otra, sin que uno tuviera verdadero derecho a escoger la historia que uno deseaba escribir, ¿no es verdad, Conejo? (1998: 247)

Now Andrés asserts his independence. His decision is provoked by a letter written by his father on Miami in which his father apologised for abandoning him as a child.

> [...] me pedía perdón por haberme abandonado y donde también me explicaba por qué se había ido: me decía que hubo un momento en el que necesitó cambiar su vida [...] Para mí aquella justificación no justificaba nada de su egoísmo, pero por primera vez ví a mi padre de una forma distinta al culpable que habíamos creado mi madre, yo y el medio ambiente... Ahora parecía un hombre, con sus propias necesidades, sus angustias y sus esperanzas, que sacrificó una parte de su vida para tener otra vida, la que él pensó que necesitaba y había decidido escoger ¿no? (1998:248)

The passage is significant for the absence of political rhetoric. Not surprisingly, given the issue's importance in US-Cuba relations, the question of national loyalty is implicated with that of emigration, particularly the departures of public figures, sportsmen and the like. (As noted earlier, Fidel Castro is mentioned only once by name in all four novels). In *Paisaje de otoño* there are three cases of emigration, Miguel Forcade Mier's, Andrés's father and Andrés himself, and not one of them is for political reasons. Padura Fuentes deliberately ignores the 'metanarrative' of the revolution in order to make the

point, that there is more to life than conforming to duty and obedience. Andrés describes how this letter, received ten years earlier, had made him reassess his opinion of his father but afterwards his life returned to normal until suddenly one morning:

> [...] me levanté sin deseos de ir al trabajo, ni de vestir a los niños, ni de hacer nada de lo que siempre suponía que debía hacer y sentí cómo toda mi vida había sido una equivocación. (1998: 247)

Andrés is aware that Conde feels the same sensation:

> ¿Eso te suena, verdad, Conde? ¿Ese saber que algo torció el rumbo que uno debió coger, que algo te empujó por un camino que no era el tuyo, y te ató a una vida que no debió ser la tuya? ¿Esa sensación rara de descubrir que no sabes cómo has llegado hasta donde estás, pero que estés en una parte que no es la que tú querías? Me cago en la mierda, ¿por qué pasan esas cosas? (1998:248)

Andrés decides to leave Cuba and unlike his father will take his children with him so they will avoid the fate that befell him:

> Si yo me iba, los estaba dejando igual que mi padre me dejó a mí y yo no quería que ellos pasaran por lo mismo. Pero si no rompía mi propia rutina los estaba condenando a vivir como yo, enseñándolos a obedecer y ser unos mandados por el resto de sus vidas, a convertirse en la segunda promoción de la generación escondida. ¿te acuerda Miki, la generación escondida? (1998: 249)

Miki is Conde's writer friend who is distinguished by having written what he called 'una novela abominable y dos libros de cuentos especialmente oportunos' (1997: 60). He is the only one of the group who has thus far fulfilled any personal ambition but has done so by 'selling out' to the establishment:

> [...] él sabía - y también el Conde - que su literatura estaba irremediablemente condenada al más rampante olvido, luego de su ocasión premeditada, pero alabada por ciertos críticos y editores, de escribir sobre campesinos y necesarias cooperativas cuando en todos los periódicos se hablaba de campesinos y necesarias cooperativas [...] (*Máscaras*1997:60).

This 'hidden generation' referred to above is Padura Fuentes's generation, those who grew up in the revolution but were too young to partake in it directly or remember the

Cuba that existed before. They are the first generation to grow up in the 'new society' of Guevara's 'New Man'. The Conde series of novels culminates in this 'hurricane' of self-realisation in which Andrés confesses his decision to leave Cuba and Conde leaves the police force. Conde decides to write about this generation in the firm conviction that life is contingent, he says to himself that his epitaph will be: 'Vivir es caer preso de un entorno inexorable' (1998: 138). Although this may also suggest natural determinism, being trapped by one's circumstances, it paradoxically implies the opposite. As noted in Chapter 8, according to Sartre, the world is contingent and in order to exist the being for-itself must act upon it, otherwise man is not really living, but merely acting out a role.

In the closing paragraph, Conde sits alone in his apartment as the hurricane rages outside and feels the tremendous fear the storm invokes. This storm, which has been threatening throughout the novel, breaks on the night of his birthday, October 10th, the date of the anniversary of the start of the first Cuban War of Independence in 1868. The date also marks October 1989, the month in which the demonstrations began in East Germany that ultimately resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is also Conde's 36th birthday and he notes that he had forgotten how to pray thirty years earlier, in 1959, the year of the revolution. As the storm breaks around him, Conde feels it may destroy the city:

> Entonces la fuerza del viento tomó proporciones de estruendo y se escuchó una explosión. El barrio estaba siendo demolido por el empuje de un viento que corría a doscientos kilómetros por hora y era poco lo que se podía hacer contra aquella perversidad celestial, salvo rezar y esperar. El Conde, que había olvidado hacía treinta años la primera de aquellas opciones, pensó si lo mejor no sería regresar a la cama y cubrirse la cabeza mientras la naturaleza realizaba su macabra maniobra purificadora. (1998: 258)

Conde has rejected religion and has lost faith in Marxism. He is in an entirely contingent world. He wonders what will remain of the city afterwards, and ponders on

the possibility that nothing will remain because 'en realidad la devastación había empezada mucho antes' and the hurricane is only coming to finish off the job. This is a truly sublime moment (1998: 259) reminiscent of the final moments of García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* when the long announced whirlwind sweeps away Macondo.

Lyotard's argument is that immense natural phenomena such as storms and volcanoes are examples of the sublime because they defy comprehension and exceed logical containment. According to Lyotard, such phenomena are ultimately threatening to community and order because they confront individuals with the possibility of their imminent and solitary demise. Here, Conde is confronted in this way. In the event of total destruction what would remain? His answer corresponds to Lyotard's theory of anamnesis. Conde concludes that only memory would remain.

> Quedaría, si acaso, la memoria, sí, la memoria, pensó el Conde, y la certeza de aquella posibilidad salvadora, victoriosa, lo hizo abandonar la cama, caminar hasta la mesa de la cocina y acomodar en su superficie manchada de quemaduras, ácidos de límon y erosiones de rones vertidos, la vieja Underwood [...] Sí ya era tiempo de empezar [...] (1998: 259)

Conde begins to write about 'toda una generación escondida' and will be:

> '[...]tan escuálida y conmovedora que ni siquiera el desastre de ese día de octubre y de todos los otros días del año, podrían vencer el acto mágico de extraer de su cerebro aquella crónica de dolor y de amor, vivida en un pasado tan remoto que la memoria trataba de dibujar con tintes más amables, hasta hacerlo parecer casi bucolico. (1998: 259)

Conde entitles the novel *Pasado perfecto*, the title of the first book in the series. Thus Padura Fuentes underlines the point that these stories are not really detective stories at all, but stories about a detective and his friends caught up in a situation not of their choosing but who are striving to choose their own destiny.

> *Pasado perfecto*, sí, así la titularía, se dijo y otro estruendo, llegado al la calle, le advertió al escribano que la demolición continuaba,

> pero él se limitó a cambiar de hoja para comenzar un nuevo párrafo [...] (1998: 259-260)

Conde is struck by the notion that memory proves we are still alive and, in the face of an uncertain future, it is the one certainty we can cling to for comfort:

> [...] porque el fin del mundo seguía acercándose, pero aun no había llegado, porque quedaba la memoria. (1998: 260)

This is how Padura Fuentes ends the series of Conde novels. By putting the first novel, *Pasado perfecto,* into the hands of Conde he sends the reader back to the beginning to reread the stories, in the hope perhaps of finding the answer. This is strikingly reminiscent of *Cien años de soledad* where Aureliano insists on reading the script as the world falls apart. Here, Conde is writing the script and, as in the García Márquez novel, the reader is sent back to the beginning because we realise the novel is the script. In the novel that Conde writes, the 'answer' is that life is composed of a series of traumas in which the individual struggles to assert him or herself against overwhelming odds. If Conde and his friends' experiences are to be read as a metaphor for Cuba as whole, as I hope to have demonstrated, the same conclusion applies. These novels provide an alternative chronicle of the thirty years of the revolutionary period and chart the disillusion detected in the island today, caught in the 'storm' of the 'inexorable entorno' of the late twentieth century.

Notes

[1] 'Recordador' is one of a number of neologisms invented by Padura Fuentes including the sentiment 'liporis' meaning the shame felt for others when they make a fool of themselves.

[2] It is important to point out here that the official Cuban view of the Angolan War is that all the soldiers who went to fight were volunteers. Fidel Castro said on numerous occasions that no one was ordered to go. Padura Fuentes (himself a veteran of the war) is here implying that this is not wholly true. Perhaps the order was never given but no-one even contemplated 'refusing to volunteer'. In other words, the ethic of obedience and belief in the mission were so powerful that to ask for volunteers was equivalent to an order. The act of not volunteering would be a sign of disaffection.

[3] 'Marielitos' refers to those Cubans who left the island in the Mariel boatlift of 1980. Half of these emigrants were refused full citizenship status, and many, because they were black and/or had no family

already in the United States, suffered exclusion and poverty in Miami. See Aguirre, B.E., 'Cuban mass migration and the social construction of deviants' in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (13: 2: 155-183) for a full discussion.

Conclusion

In his interview with Verity Smith in 1996, Leonardo Padura Fuentes says that he began to write police novels after realising that the genre in Cuba had entered into a period of 'crisis irreversible':

> Con esa perspectiva es que, a partir de los años '86-88, empiezo a tener contactos con la literatura policíaca que se escribía en esos momentos en el mundo y de la cual no teníamos información en Cuba. Eso cambió mi perspectiva sobre la literatura policíaca actual y decidí escribir una novela de este género. Lo que quería hacer era escribir una novela policíaca sin los defectos que tenía este tipo de novela en su versión cubana. (Smith 1996: 4)

Thus Padura Fuentes confirms a central proposal of this thesis, that he has personally succeeded in carrying out a genre shift in the Cuban detective novel. In doing so he has also confirmed a second proposal in this thesis, that detective fiction is useful as an indicator of social change. In the passage above he mentions that it was only in the late 1980s that he became aware of the deficiencies of the Cuban genre, when he came into contact with the kind of fiction being produced in the rest of the world. It was this influence which inspired his decision to write. Crucially, before this period, Cuban culture was isolated from the rest of the world, partly as a result of external pressures as a result of the Cold War, but also, as we have seen, because of the turns that Cuban government policies took internally. In effect, wider social and economic factors were a root cause in Padura Fuentes's conversion. It is no mere coincidence that the period 1986-88 coincided with the period of *Rectificación* when the Soviet ways of doing things were called into question. Indeed, what Padura Fuentes is saying proves the simple point that the kinds of fiction produced by a society are inextricably linked to the broader picture. I have shown in this thesis that this is particularly true of Cuba and I have expressed it in diagram form (see diagram 3).

Period/ *(Chapters of thesis)*	Mode of production/state of economy	Cultural policy/ideology	Detective fiction
1917-1959 *(Chapter 4)*	Free market capitalist dominated by the United States.	Varying periods of censorship and liberalism/market domination. Heavy U.S. influence.	Commercially driven/sensationalist e.g. *Chan Li Po*. Racially stereotyped e.g. *La hija del policía*. Socially critical e.g. *Fantoches 1927*, stories of Lino Novás Calvo.
1959- c1969 *(Chapters 2, 3 and 5)*	Gradual imposition of state control.	Gradual imposition of state control. Massive expansion of arts and book production. / Ideology of the 'heroic guerrilla' idealist/ non-Soviet socialist.	No domestically produced detective literature. Foreign 'classics' published in translation. TV shows based upon real-life episodes of the revolution e.g. *Sector 40*.
1969-71 *(Chapters 2, 3 and 5)*	Complete state control/ownership. Period in which economy goes into crisis. Makes closer co-operation with Soviet Union necessary.	Period of Padilla Affair. Fear of foreign influences drives demand for tighter control of cultural policy. 1971 Congress of Education and Culture institutionalises homophobia.	*Enigma para un domingo* wins mention in 1969 literary contest. Is published in 1971 and becomes runaway best-seller. Ministry of Interior sets up crime writing prize in 1971.
1971-76 *(Chapters 3,5 and 6)*	Economy is centrally planned along Soviet lines. Cuba joins the COMECON economic pact.	Period of *El quinquenio gris* in which prominent intellectuals and homosexuals are marginalised. Most repressive period.	Intellectuals encourage creation of a 'socialist detective formula'. First such novels are produced e.g. *La ronda de los rubíes*. Huge print runs/heavily flawed and homophobic. Authors are mainly amateurs. Plots are set in Cuba. Mainly puzzle genre.
1976-79 *(Chapters 2, 3 and 6)*	Economy remains 'sovietised'. Improving economic performance.	New Ministry of Culture is established under the liberal Armando Hart Dávalos. The persecution of homosexuals ends. Gradual slackening of political control.	Period in which Cuban critics see 'best' crime literature written by professional authors. E.g. *Joy* and *Y si muero mañana*. Plots are set in foreign lands. Mainly espionage genre.
1979-85 *(Chapter 5)*	Sovietised economy enters liquidity problems.	Massive expansion of book production.	Plethora of publications. Cuban critics lament lack of quality.
1985-1989 *(Chapter 6)*	*Rectificación* is adopted in Cuba. Some reforms to boost hard currency earnings.	Period in which intellectuals begin to question Soviet model. Ochoa and other scandals rock establishment.	1986 association of Cuban crime writers is set up. First international conference is held. Foreign guests point out Cuban genre's weaknesses. Critics e.g. Padura Fuentes and Pequeño question Cuban genre.
1989-99 *(Chapters 7-10)*	Collapse of Soviet union creates huge shortages, forces economic reforms. Cuba moves towards mixed economy.	Cultural restrictions are loosened. New generation of writers emerge who reassess revolutionary past. (e.g. Senel Paz) Youthful Abel Prieto becomes new Culture Minister. Paper shortage and need to earn foreign currency means authors seek publication abroad. Film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993) exposes scandal of homosexual repression in 1970s.	Padura Fuentes begins to write Conde tetralogy completely revising the Cuban genre. *Pasado perfecto* is denied 1991 detective story prize for 'political' reasons. Successfully published abroad. Forces reassessment within the island. His second novel *Vientos de cuaresma* is given UNEAC prize in 1993. His third, *Máscaras*, wins 1995 Spanish Café Gijón prize. Success forces acceptance at home. Fourth novel *Paisaje de otoño* published in Spain 1998

Diagram 3. Detective Fiction in Cuban Society and Culture 1917-1999

By tracing the history of Cuban detective literature from its early origins in the pre-revolutionary period through to the end of the twentieth century I have been able to perceive eight periods in which economic and political determinants ostensibly shifted. To each of these periods a broadly corresponding subdivision of the history of detective fiction in Cuba can also be made.

A study of diagram 3 illustrates the main conclusions I wish to draw from this thesis. Firstly, that changes that have taken place in Cuban detective literature are an indication of changes in the national culture and society. Secondly, that contrary to the views of anti-Castro and anti-Communist critics of the revolution, the revolution is not 'Stalinist' by nature or monolithic and unchanging. Indeed, through the period of the revolution, Cuban ideology and cultural policies have fluctuated, reaching a nadir in the period of severe repression in 1971-76, but currently undergoing reappraisal. Thirdly, that these changes are linked to generational shifts as younger writers came to maturity. The current wave of change is partly therefore a result of the ascendance to prominence of writers such as Senel Paz, Leonardo Padura Fuentes and Abel Prieto (the Culture Minister) who witnessed injustices in their youth and now wish to make amends.

After he was denied the detective story prize for his first novel *Pasado Perfecto* in 1991, Padura Fuentes notes that the decision to finally publish it in Cuba was taken by Prieto when was head of the Writers and Artists union, UNEAC, before he became a Minister:

> Una de las personas que la leyó fue, precisamente, Abel Prieto y dijo: 'Bueno éste es un libro necesario que tenemos que publicar en Cuba. Es un libro necesario porque es otra visión de la novela policíaca cubana y es un libro que es literatura a la vez.' (Smith 1996: 5)

This thesis explains why Prieto felt this way about Padura Fuentes's work, and presents the history of a genre so as to inform an understanding of the way in which the

genre developed in a particular context. The first section, Chapter 1, established the theoretical justification that the study of detective fiction as a popular art form could serve such a project. Chapter 2 analysed Cuban revolutionary ideology to show that it emerged as a praxis and was not imported from the Soviet Union. Chapter 3 explained the cultural political background into which the Cuban revolutionary detective genre was to emerge and the kinds of debates in practice that revolutionaries have had concerning the theories discussed in Chapter 1.

The second section, Chapter 4 gave an overview of the Cuban pre-revolutionary detective genre including discussion of early films which have not been recognised by Cuban academics who may still be working in a selective tradition that wishes to 'forget' pre-revolutionary achievements in favour of those that came later. This chapter also established the fact that there was already a demand for detective fiction before the post 1959 boom. Chapter 5 discussed and explained the way in which the Cuban revolutionary detective genre came into being as an experiment in inculcating the masses with a new ideology and placed it in a tradition of similar experiments that have taken place in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Chapter 6 looked at the development of this genre through the 1971-91 period, and how it changed in consonance with changes in the broader social field and how it came to be seen to be defunct by Cuban critics themselves during the latter part of the 1980s. Thus, the first two sections of the thesis serve as a long introduction to the main subject of the work, which is the four novel sequence of detective stories by Leonardo Padura Fuentes, whose first novel *Pasado perfecto* was, as Abel Prieto recognised, a new departure for the post-revolutionary genre.

Section Three, Chapter 7, discussed the ways in which genre shifts have taken place elsewhere in the world and at different times, to show that the same process is at work

in the case of Padura Fuentes. In Chapter 8, Jean Paul Sartre was established as a major influence on Padura Fuentes's work, a figure who is not inconsequential in the history of Cuban cultural policy as Chapter 3 showed. In Chapter 9, the impact of Padura Fuente's novel *Máscaras* was discussed (in which Jean Paul Sartre appears) alongside that of the film *Fresa y chocolate*, in particular, with reference to their treatment of the repression of homosexuals and intellectuals in Cuba in the 1970s. In this way, the value of detective literature as performing the function of a 'surrogate history' was established. Finally, Chapter 10 provided an exploration of the ways in which postmodernity is represented in Padura Fuentes's texts with reference to the work of the French philosophers Jean François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard.

It is clear that the Conde novels evidence a curious if not altogether unexpected confluence of existentialist and postmodern thought. At the same time these ideas are rearticulated in a literary discourse that is shaped to the requirements of a popular literary genre. In this way Padura Fuentes has drawn upon a long Cuban tradition to provide a cutting critique of the current Cuban social malaise. By concentrating on investigations into crimes committed by individuals in authority, not merely against the bodies of other individuals, but also against the social body itself, Padura Fuentes has not merely subverted a literary genre but has provided a critique of the official history of the Cuban revolution itself. By undermining some of the basic concepts and precepts upon which the Cuban revolution is based, that is to say Soviet socialism, altruism, sacrifice and patriotism, the crimes and criminals of the Conde novels present a cruel dilemma. The novels chronicle the demise of the justifying metanarratives of the revolution and the resulting existential void. There is a reappraisal of the role of the individual in Cuban society, and his relocation in the collective consciousness. By focusing on the concept of personal choice (free will), individual identity and

subjectivity, the Conde novels re-arbitrate the balance between individual freedom and social obligation in a way that corresponds to changes currently taking place in Cuban society.

Literature as creative writing places great importance on imagination and therefore subjectivity, whereas historical or political discourse foregrounds objectivity. I have inserted the Conde novels into a long tradition of literature as social commentary, from *Don Quijote* to *Cien años de soledad* via Sartre and Salinger, among others, and especially the crime or detective fiction tradition fostered above all by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. In addition, I have argued that intertextuality is important in establishing that the novels fall within the tradition of imaginative writing and art employed as instruments of social critique. The conflict between the individual (Conde) and his world (Havana in the 1990s) represents a wider conflict between personal freedom and collective coercion.

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Appendix 1

US based terrorism against Cuba: A Chronology 1959-1998

By Stephen Wilkinson

Speaking in London on June 16th 1996, Noam Chomsky, the Nobel Prize Winner and outspoken critic of US foreign policy told an audience of over two thousand civil liberties activists: "The US terrorist campaign against Cuba is the longest and most brutal terrorist war ever launched by one state against another in history."[1]

It is impossible to count the number of acts of violence perpetrated against the Cuban Revolution since its victory in 1959. Because there are so many, any count would inevitably overlook some incidents which might have occurred and continue to occur today.

From 1961 until 1964 the US openly and actively pursued an official policy of terrorist destabilisation code-named Operation Mongoose, whose aim was to assassinate the Cuban president, Fidel Castro. Today, officially the US says it no longer supports the terrorist attacks upon Cuba but its territory still serves as the location of bases from which attacks are launched and US citizens form the majority of those making such attacks. If caught, the terrorists are very rarely prosecuted by the US authorities, a fact which leads the Cuban government to accuse the US government of covertly supporting the campaign.

Here is a list of attacks from 1959 until 1998[2]:

1959

February 2 A US citizen is arrested after flying a small plane to Cuba with the aim of killing Fidel Castro.

March 10 US national Security Council meets to discuss ways to put another government in power in Cuba.

June 5 Cuban Embassy in Dominican Republic is attacked. Two diplomats assaulted.

June 10 Cuban Ambassador to Haiti is machine-gunned.

August 4 Two Cuban planes are destroyed in a hangar in Miami as part of an ongoing sabotage campaign aimed at US businessmen trading with Cuba.

August 10 Radio campaign from Dominican Republic starts urging Cubans to revolt and set fire to cane fields.

October 11-21 Three raids by planes from the US bomb sugar mills in Cuba.

October 21 Two people are killed and 45 wounded in an air raid on Havana. The pilot is a former Cuban Air Force chief. The US refuses to extradite him to face trial in Cuba.

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[1] Noam Chomsky was speaking at the Liberty Conference on Civil Rights, Westminster Central Hall, London, June 16th 1996. Transcript available from Liberty.

[2] **Sources**:

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October 22 A train full of passengers in Las Villas province is machine gunned from the air.

1960

January 12 Incendiary bombs are dropped on cane fields in Havana province.
January 21 Four 100lb bombs are dropped on Havana city.
January 28 Planes bomb five sugar cane fields in Camagüey province.
February 7 Air attack burns several cane mills in Camagüey.
February 18 US pilot Ellis Frost is killed when his plane explodes as he attacks a cane mill in Matanzas. Documents found in the wreck reveal he has invaded Cuban airspace repeatedly.
February 23 More air attacks on sugar harvest.
March 4 The *Coubre*, a French freighter explodes in Havana harbour killing 116 workers and soldiers. It explodes twice in timed explosions to cause maximum deaths.
March 8 More attacks on cane fields.
March 17 US President Eisenhower secretly orders CIA to organise the training of the Cuban exiles who would later invade Cuba in the Bay of Pigs fiasco.
April 4 A plane flies out of US base in Guantanamo and sets fire to cane in Oriente province.
August 2 The CIA sets up a committee to recruit organised crime members in the plot to kill Fidel Castro
September 8 Counter-revolutionary guerrilla groups land in the Escambrey mountains and start a guerrilla war.
October 8-10 Weapons dropped from US planes into the Escambrey Mountains to supply guerrillas are intercepted by Cuban militia. A hundred counter-revolutionaries are arrested.
October 18 J Edgar Hoover writes a memo to CIA boss Richard Bissel that he knows Chicago crime boss Sam Giancana has been hired to kill Fidel Castro.
October 29 Nine counter-revolutionaries hijack a Cuban DC-3 plane killing a soldier and wounding a 14 year old boy.
December 27 Four months prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion a fifth column of 17 members is arrested with bomb making equipment and explosives of US origin.
December 31 *La Epoca* department store in Central Havana is burnt down in arson attack.

1961

January 7-9 US planes drop weapons onto Escambrey mountains.
January 19 Seven US mercenaries are captured landing in Pinar del Río province.
January 20 New president Kennedy is briefed by CIA on their plans to kill Fidel Castro.
February1-10 Felix I Rodríguez infiltrates into Cuba but his tram is captured. He seeks refuge in Venezuelan Embassy and stays there for five months before securing a safe passage of the country. Rodríguez admits to infiltrating into Cuba to carry out acts of sabotage for the CIA at the 1987 hearings into the Iran Contra affair.
February 28 CIA delivers a box of exploding cigars to Fidel Castro.
March 11 sabotage blacks out Havana.
March 12 An oil refinery in Santiago de Cuba is attacked by boat.
March 22 New York Times reports that Cuban exile groups are getting state funding to sabotage Cuba.
April 13 A woman is killed in a department store explosion. 17 years later Philip Agee testifies on how the CIA put explosives inside dolls on the store shelves.
April 15 US B26 bombers start 'softening up' attacks on Cuba. Seven Cubans are killed.
April 17 Bay of Pigs invasion begins.
April 18 US sends in six bombers to assist invasion. Four pilots are killed proving US involvement in the attack.
November 15 Kennedy starts preparing Operation Mongoose, a plan to overthrow Castro by use of terror and violence.
November 30 Operation Mongoose is given staff of 400.
December 26 Two CIA agents are captured in Pinar del Río.

1962

January 7 Arms dropped from a plane in Pinar del Río are seized.
January 28 A terrorist group is captured planting mines in Havana.
February 3 Kennedy announces total US embargo of Cuba.
March 14 Final plan of Operation Mongoose is completed.
April 9 Cuba sends diplomatic note of protest against continued sabotage attacks emanating form Guantanamo Bay naval base.
April 28 Cuban journalists in New York are injured in armed attack on the Prensa Latina office.
May 12 Armed ship attacks a Cuban patrol boat. Alpha 66 a Miami based terrorist group claims responsibility.
June 7 Two saboteurs killed in Oriente province.
July 17 CIA agent Juan Falcon arrested in Havana.
August 11 A group of CIA agents captured in Camagüey.
August 15 A group of CIA agents captured in Havana.
August 22 CIA agents poison a cargo of sugar bound for USSR while ship is docked in Puerto Rico.
August 24 Two ships shell Havana hotels. One of the gunners is Jose Basulto who declares his intention was to kill Castro who he though was staying in one of them. Basulto is the leader of the Brothers to the Rescue organisation which infiltrated Cuban air space on February 24th 1996 provoking the incident which resulted in two pilots losing their lives and in Clinton signing into law the Helms-Burton Act.
August 30 The committee overseeing Operation Mongoose prepares list of 300 targets in Cuba for terrorist attack.
November 12 Cuba arrests Miguel Crespo who confesses to being head of the CIA network in Cuba. He admits to having been trained in the US.

1963

January 11 11-year-old is killed in terrorist attack.
February 13 Two men are wounded when their fishing boat is attacked in Cuban waters.
February 21 Eight infiltrators are captured.
March 17 Alpha 66 attacks soviet ship as it arrives in Cuba.
August 15 Plane bombs sugar mill in Camagüey. Man is killed when his home is bombed.
October 21 Three CIA infiltrators captured.

1964

February 2 YS seizes four Cuban fishing boats.
May 13 Boat shells sugar mill in Oriente destroying 70,000 sacks of sugar. Hit and run raids like this continue until 1975 directed by Paul Helliwell a CIA agent working out of the Bahamas using money from two front banks set up by the CIA.
May 29 Luminous globes are dropped on Sancti Spiritus which bust on contact with ground and release a glutinous jelly of the kind which is used to grow bacteria.
June 12 Cuban armed forces report states that the Guantanamo base has been the source of 1,651 acts of provocation since November 1962.
June 19 A plane is shot down while bombing a sugar mill in Las Villas.

1965

January 26 Four CIA infiltrators are captured in the Escambrey, among the Eloyo Gutiérrez Menoyo, founder of Alpha 66.
February 6 Four more infiltrators captured. Appearing on TV they tell of how they were recruited and trained by the CIA..

1966

March 1 Rolando Cubelas arrested and convicted of trying to assassinate Fidel Castro.
May 21 A Cuban soldier is killed by fire from Guantanamo navel base.
June 1 CIA agent is captured in Pinar del Río.
June 11 Three planes infiltrate Cuban air space.
September 29 A new power station in Camagüey is bombed by a plane.

1967

January 5 CIA agent Enrique González Rodríguez 'el Flaco' is captured in Las Villas.
May 3 A fragmentation bomb is thrown at the car of Cuba's ambassador to Mexico.
July 16 Francisco Avila is captured preparing to assassinate Fidel Castro.

1968

March 5 Arson destroys tannery in Las Villas. In following three months arson attacks destroy schools, boats and warehouses in the province.
September 7 Cuba announces capture of 18 CIA agents.
September 18 Cuban exiles admit campaign of arson on US businesses and travel agencies which deal with Cuba.
November 19 Two US marines captured in Oriente province.
December 4 Five infiltrators captured in Pinar del Río.

1969

January 9 Nixon orders stepped up terror campaign in Cuba.
April 13 Cubans arrest Alejandro Blas Martínez accused of planning a sabotage campaign of sugar harvest on orders from US.
May 3 CIA agents infiltrating in Oriente province are captured.
September 12 CIA agent José Quesada Fernández is captured in Oriente.

1970

March-April Infiltrators are captured throughout island.
April 17 Alpha 66 attacks a target in eastern Cuba killing four Cubans.
May 1 Arson destroys sugar warehouse.
May10 Two Cuban fishing boats attacked.
October 5 Infiltrators in Baracoa captured.

1971

February 24 Four Cuban fishing boats seized by US coastguard.
May 6 The first swine fever in the Western hemisphere is detected in Cuba Six weeks later Cuba has to slaughter 500,000 pigs. In 1977 US press reveals that CIA introduced virus into Cuba.
July 12 Exiles in Miami claim responsibility for bombing a train in Guantanamo in which four people are killed.
October 12 Speedboat strafes village in Oriente killing two.
December 5 Cuba captures two speedboats used in raids on coast. They both belong to Miami exiles.
December 22 Captured speedboat captain José Villa admits he was working for the CIA.

1972

April 14 Explosion in Cuban Commerce office in Montreal kills Cuban official.

1973

January 28 Cuban fisherman is killed in attack off the Bahamas.
March 12 Bomb explodes at Center for Cuban studies in New York.
June 21 Cuban Chamber of Commerce in Chile bombed.
August 27 Chilean chamber bombed again.
September 5 Second device is thrown into home of Cuba's Chilean representative.
October 2 US detains Cuban merchant ship.
October 4 Two Cuban fishing boats are shelled killing one.

1974

January 20 Cuban Embassy in Mexico City is bombed.

February 13 A package addressed to Cuban embassy in Madrid explodes in central Post Office.
March 26 Bombs are thrown at the Cuban embassy in Jamaica.
April 19 Cuban Embassy in Madrid is destroyed by a bomb.
May 4 Cuban embassy in London is bombed.
May 14 Cuban consulate in Merida Mexico is bombed.
July 3 Bomb explodes in Cuban Embassy in Paris.
August 1 Three CIA agents captured on a launch containing sabotage equipment.
August 17 Cuban embassy in Lima, Peru is strafed from a car.
September 11 Omega 7 terrorist organisation is founded in Miami.
October 5 plot to kill Castro is foiled.
November December Bombs explode in Mexico City after Mexico declares its support for re-admitting Cuba to OAS.

1975

January Anti-Cuba bombings in Mexico kill five people.
February 1 Omega 7 bombs Venezuelan mission to UN after it supports Cuba.
February 21 Lucian Nieves a pro-dialogue Miami Cuban is assassinated.
June 19 Sam Giancana is assassinated days prior to being due to testify before senate Select Intelligence Committee about his role in the plot to kill Castro.
June 24 Ray s. cline CIA deputy director from 1962 to 1966, testifies that both Eisenhower and Kennedy authorised the CIA to overthrow Castro 'by any means.'
June 24 Crime boss John Roselli testifies that he tried to kill Fidel and Raul Castro for the CIA in 1961.
July 30 Senator George McGovern releases documents detailing 24 CIA attempts to kill Castro.

1976

April 6 Two Cuban fishing boats are sunk killing one.
April 22 Two Cuban officials killed in bombing of Cuban embassy in Lisbon.
April 30 Miami pro-dialogue radio journalist loses his legs when his car explodes.
June CIA boss George Bush has agent Orlando Bosch found the Commanders of the United Revolutionary Organisation (CORU) as an umbrella group for terror attacks on Cuba.
June 6 Omega 7 claims responsibility for bomb in Cuban UN mission.
July 9 CORU claims responsibility for bomb in baggage bound for a Cubana flight in Kingston Jamaica.
July 10 CORU sets off a bomb in Cuban Airlines' Barbados Office.
July 27 Mexico foils plot to plant three bombs in Cuban Embassy in Mexico.
August 18 CORU bombs the Cuban Airlines Office in Panama.
September 16 Omega 7 bombs a soviet ship docked in New Jersey.
October 6 Cuban Airlines passenger jet explodes killing 73 people, of whom 57 are Cubans including the national fencing team.
October 14 Orlando Bosch is arrested in Venezuela accused of planting the Cubana bomb. The subsequent investigation reveals a network of spies responsible for the Cuban campaign.
November 7 Cubana office in Madrid is destroyed by bomb.
December 19 Federal agents visit Venezuela to interview Bosch about the September 21 assassination of Chilean official Orlando Letelier.

1977

May 27 Mackay international Airlines offices are bombed leading to cancellation of its flights to Cuba.
June 8 Carras Lines cancels its cruises to Cuba after bomb threats.
December 20 Omega 7 claims responsibility for explosions in the offices of a Spanish firm that ships medicines to Cuba.
December 26 omega 7 bombs Venezuelan Mission to UN in protest at continued detention of Orlando Bosch.

1978

April 14 FBI arrests two omega 7 members for assassination of Orlando Letelier.
August 1 Five Cuban Americans are indicted for assassination for Orlando Letelier.

October 21 Omega 7 bombs New York newspaper 'El Diary' which had published articles on their organisation.
December 29 Omega 7 bombs Cuba UN mission and Lincoln Centre New York stopping performance by Cuban orchestra.

1979

Feb 14 Two Omega 7 members found guilty of assassination of Orlando Letelier.
March 25 Omega 7 plants three bombs in New York's Kennedy Airport.
April 28 Omega 7 bombs travel agent which organises trips to Cuba in Puerto Rico.
May 18 Omega 7 bombs Cuban Interest Section in Washington.
October 27 Omega 7 bombs Cuban UN Mission.
November 25 Omega 7 assassinates Eulalio Negín one of the committee of 75 which promoted dialogue with Cuba.
December 7 Omega 7 bombs UN mission and Soviet mission at the UN.

1980

May 8 Arson destroys Cuba's largest day care centre.
June 14 Castro says US infected the tobacco, sugar cane and the pig population.
September 11 Omega 7 kills Cuban diplomat Félix García Rodríguez
September 15 Federal appeals court overturns convictions of Omega 7 members found guilty of assassinating Orlando Letelier.

1981

May 30 Omega 7 members acquitted in retrial
July 4 Five members of Alpha 66 infiltrate Cuba with plan to assassinate Castro. After capture they admit they have conducted 30 sabotage missions in six months including an attack on a power plant.
July 26 Castro blames US for Dengue fever which killed 113 people, including 81 children. In 1984 Omega 7 leader admits that they spread germs in Cuba in 1980.
July 27 Cuba requests US help in eradicating Dengue fever but US refuses to send pesticides.
August 7 Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis participates in failed attempts to invade Cuba.
November 13 Venezuela asks for evidence from Cuba on Orlando Bosch.

1982

September 2 Omega 7 bombs Venezuelan Consulate in Miami to protest against continued detention of Orlando Bosch.

1983

May 27 Omega 7 claims responsibility for fifth bombing in Miami.

1985

August 22 Lewis Posada arrested with Bosch for bombing Cubana airliner, escapes from jail in Venezuela.

1987

July 6 89 Cuban double agents come out which blows apart CIA network operating from the US Interest Section in Havana.
August 7 Orlando Bosch is acquitted by Venezuelan military court for taking part in 1976 bombing of Cuban passenger jet.

1988

February 16 Orlando Bosch arrives in Miami from Venezuela.

1989

November 16 The LA Times reports that the Bush administration had agreed that the US may participate in covert operations that might lead to violence or death of foreign leaders. Assassination would not be approved overtly but it would no longer be illegal.

1990

June 14 A bomb explodes at the Cuban museum of art in Miami because it exhibits work by Cubans.
July 17 US justice department frees Orlando Bosch after lobbying by Republican Senator Connie Mack.

1991

December 20 Three members of "Commandos L", a terrorist organisation of Cuban exiles, are captured in Cuba after landing their boat carrying weapons.

1992

July 4 Without asking Cuba's permission, the U.S. Coast Guard enters Cuban waters to rescue members of "Commandos L" after their heavily-armed boat malfunctions during one of their secret missions.

October 7 From an offshore speedboat, a group of "Commandos L" fires shots at the Hotel Meliá on Varadero Beach. When Cuba formally protests to the State Department, the protest is referred to the Justice Department, which in turn asks the FBI to investigate. Cuban officials present to the Chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana two volumes of evidence including eyewitness accounts, photographs, and bullets taken from the Hotel Meliá. "Commandos L" carries out at least eight raids against Cuba in 1992.

December 29 Cuban pilot Carlos Cancio Porcel and several other people with their families hijack a Cuban airliner to Miami, chloroforming a security guard and tying up the co-pilot. Cancio is detained but released when the U.S. Justice Department rules that his action did not constitute a hijacking.

1993

January 7 At a news conference, Tony Bryant, leader of "Commandos L", announces plans for more raids against targets in Cuba, especially hotels. Warning tourists to stay off the island, he declared, "From his point on, we're at war", adding, "The Neutrality Act doesn't exist".

January 7 A group of Cubans hijacks a fishing boat to Florida after tying up the boat's captain. The U.S. Attorney's office decides that there is "no basis for prosecution".

October According to the Associated Press, Andrés Nazario Sargen, head of "Alpha 66", boasts that "Alpha 66" has staged five recent missions inside Cuba. He adds that Tony Bryant, Chief of "Commandos L" is "learning where every general lives" in Cuba and "they will be targeted to be eliminated".

1995

July 13 In Cuban waters, several boats organised by "Brothers to the Rescue" turn around and return to Florida after one of the boats collides with a Cuban Border Patrol vessel. Cuba says that 11 boats, six small planes, and two helicopters have penetrated Cuba's water and air space. One plane flew over the coastal zone of Havana, and dropped leaflets over Havana, urging protests against the Cuban government. Cuban officials warn that any aircraft which violates Cuban airspace risks being shot down. When "Brothers to the Rescue" attempts another such voyage on September 2, they turn back after one boat sinks 10 miles off Key West, dumping 47 people into rough seas and causing one death. The U.S. Coast Guard comes to their rescue.

1996

January 13 "Brothers to the Rescue" again drops thousands of leaflets with anti-government slogans over Havana. According to AP, the Federal Aviation Administration is investigating José Basulto, head of the organisation and a veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion, for violating Cuban airspace in this incident and the July 1995 incident. The case is still pending.
October A US registered crop dusting plane flies over central Cuba and releases a mysterious cloud. Cuba claims the cloud was the crop eating insect *Thrips palmi* which begins to affect food crops across Matanzas and Havana provinces. At first the US denied the plane ever existed then is forced to admit that it did pass over Cuba and release a cloud when Cuban witnesses identify it by its number. The US

admits the plane was on its way to spray drug crops in Colombia but denies that it released the insect. Cuba begins a case against the US at the UN biological weapons convention in Geneva.

1997

April-August: A series of small bombs explode in the main tourist hotels in Havana. Little damage is caused but the head of "Commandos L" says they were planted by their "contacts" on the island. Four members of a 'human rights' group with links to the Miami based brothers to the rescue operation are arrested in Havana after businessmen denounced them to the Cuban authorities. The businessmen claimed that the detained had warned them not to do business in Cuba in case their investments "were bombed."

September. An Italian businessman is killed in a blast at the Triton Hotel as three more bombs explode in Havana. The Cuban authorities arrest a Salvadoran mercenary named Ernesto Cruz León, a former military student at the Georgia academy in the US, who admits to having been paid $4,500 by the Cuban American National Foundation for each bomb.

November Four Miami Cubans are arrested by federal Agents in Puerto Rico bound for Margarita Island where Fidel Castro is due to speak to the Ibero-American summit. On board their launch are two high powered rifles. The yacht and one of the rifles are registered to two Cuban American National Foundation members.

1998

July 13-14 New York Times publishes the confession by Luis Posada Carriles that he masterminded the Hotel bombings and had received payments from the former head of CANF, Jorge Mas Canosa. He also admits to having been trained by the CIA and for having worked for the agency in the past.

August Four Cuban Americans are indicted by federal grand Jury in Puerto Rico charged with plotting to kill Fidel Castro at the Ibero-American summit. One of the accused is Antonio Llamas, the registered owner of the launch they were arrested in and an executive member of the CANF.

Appendix 2

Interview with Oscar Luis López. Havana (14-12-95)
Oscar Luis López (b. Havana 1912) was the voice of Chan Li Po, the famous Chinese radio detective invented by Félix B Caignet, one of Cuba's earliest and most successful radio drama pioneers. After ending his portrayal of Chan Li Po in 1941, Oscar started a career as a producer of radio and television drama eventually becoming one of the founders of ICRT (Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión). He continued working in the industry after the Revolution and is the author of *La radio en Cuba*, a history of Cuban radio (Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1981).

¿Por qué has escrito esta historia?

Me pensé que era una necesidad, una obligación que nosotros en nuestro país tuviéramos la historia de la radio tele-novela teniendo en cuenta que es Cuba el primer país que tiene radio y que es en Cuba donde a través de Félix B. Caignet escritor y periodista sale la primera radio-novela y que por otra parte durante todo ese tiempo inclusive en la actualidad, grabaciones, libretos de todo nuestra obra radial se ha distribuido en toda la América Latina y parte de Europa. Es decir, la radio-telenovela en los países de América Latina y parte de Europa se debe a Cuba. Yo estimé que eso debía estar escrito en blanco y negro con lujos de detalles con fechas.

¿La radio-novela fue una invención en Cuba?

En Cuba la radio-novela es posiblemente primero o segundo país que sale una radio-novela pero además la distribuye en grabaciones y en los libretos y durante aquella época nos contrataban Venezuela, Brasil, Colombia, México para ir a dar clases y a dirigir ese tipo de genero de novela. Estimé que debí hacer un libro y lo hice, muy pequeño y al final del libro teniendo en cuenta que yo fui muy amigo de Félix B. Caignet que protagonice el *Chan Li Po* que era precisamente el detective Chino del inicio de la radio-novela detectivesca, pues pensé que al final el espectáculo hasta esta que se calcula de más audiencia que ha tenido fue en año 1937 con el Chan Li Po, única y exclusivamente igualado en 1948 a través del propio Félix B. Caignet y *El derecho de nacer* Fue *El derecho de nacer* la segunda radio-novela que se calcula de más audencia de acuerdo con los periódicos. Ya en esta etapa existe el survey en el 37 no había los survey para saber qué audiencia tenía pero en el 48 si existía. Y el por ciento que arrojó de acuerdo con los periódicos de la epóca, había sido el más alto por ciento en el mundo, que un programa de ese tipo tuviera audiencia. Son millones de oyentes que tenía. Todo esto está en este pequeño libro.

¿Cómo se llama este libro?

La radio telenovela en Cuba.

¿Debe estar en la biblioteca, no?

No, es inédito. No ha podido ser publicado. No hay papel. Lo tengo aquí. Esta escrito a mano. Es decir, que todo lo que sea novela radial, radio novela y en principio,

yo también soy fundador de la televisión y entonces el inicio de la radio novela en TV también aparece en este pequeño libro, pequeñito. Por eso fue que Núñez lo manda a mí porque estima soy el que manejo todo este mecanismo.

Pero qué lastima que no puedes publicarlo. Es muy importante por la cultura.

Enorme la importancia que tiene. Entonces, ese es un tipo de libro que yo le calculo con los tres capítulos... el primer capítulo es Chan Li Po ... el primer capítulo del *Chilín y Bebita*. Caignet inicia también en 1931 la narrativa infantíl; en la forma episódica: capítulo uno, capítulo dos, hasta esa momento no existía ni se había hecho nada en Cuba. Es a partir también de Félix B. Caignet. Entonces yo pongo el primer capítulo de *Chilín y Bebita*, el primer capítulo de *Chan Li Po* y el primer capítulo de *El derecho de nacer* al final de todo este trabajo. Pero no se sabe cuando ni cómo, no hay papel, no hay papel. Entonces comprenderá este trabajo inédito que es el primero en nuestro país pero por otra parte el primero fuera o que fuera en nuestro país ese análisis no se ha hecho. Se puede imaginar la importancia que tiene pero yo no puedo dárselo. Es el único documento que no puedo soltarlo y entonces tienes que esperar a ver cuando.

No le iba a pedirlo. Pero explícame, por favor, algo sobre la historia de la radio-novela detectivesca.

Hasta 1934 en nuestro país a nadie absolutamente se le ha occurrido hacer un programa policíaco en forma de novela. Sin embargo a Félix B. Caignet, periodista, escritor y compositor, es el que en 1931 crea en nuestro país inicialmente a los que nosotros llamamos episodios. Es decir: hoy, capítulo uno, mañana capítulo dos etcetera, hace pequeña series de ocho, diez, doce hasta 20 capítulos. Eso es en el 31. Todo esa material yo lo tengo en mi poder, los originales yo lo tengo en mi poder. Eso se le debe a Félix B Caignet. Entonces eso es en el 31. Demás están decir que la palabra 'novela radial' no existe, no se ha publicado ni en revistas , ni en periodicos mucho menos se ha dicho frente a un micrófono. La palabra radio novela o novela radial no existe. Entonces, en el año 34 el propio Félix B. Caignet saca por vez primara episodios detectivescos de *Chan Li Po*, donde la columna vertebral es el chino detective. En este momento que Caignet crea ese espectáculo por primera vez en nuestro país sale al aire una novela detectivesca. Hasta ese momento no ha habido novelas en toda Cuba hasta 34. Sale a partir del 34 pero él no le llama novela, la palabra novela, no, él le llama episodio. Entonces son *Los episodios de Chan Li Po.* Pero la palabra, novela, no.

A partir de 1934, con la salida al aire de ese espectáculo toda Cuba, en todas las emisoras grandes o pequeñas alguién se sentó y empezó a hacer episodios en forma humorística, con detectives corte humorístico también y haciendo un paladeo de lo que era Chan Li Po. Esto que Caignet hace en el año 34 lo hace en el Oriente. Y me explica Caignet que a él le interesaba venir a la ciudad de la Habana. Venir aquí para proponer ese espectáculo a ver si gustaba. Y entonces, en el año 37 viene a la Habana.

¿El era de Santiago?

De Santiago de Cuba. Viene para la Habana con su espectáculo y el que en aquel momento intepreta al detective. Vienen los dos por la Habana y empieza a proponer en las distintas emisoras y a los distintas anunciantes, el espectáculo. Nadie los quiere, nadie, todo el mundo le dice que el inconscientemente, no se ha dado cuenta que la

Habana no es Santiago y la ciudad un espectáculo de ese tipo no interesa. En ese momento Habana estaba llena, llena, llena, todas las emisoras eran de teatro radial o sea radio teatro. Primer acto, segundo y tercero. No obstante él haciendo contacto por aquí, por allá, hasta que llegó a un director de una emisora y le planteó la inteción de que en la Habana se radiara Chan Li Po, en el año 37. Entonces él le dijo que a él le interesaba pero el querría hacer una prueba.. Es decir, en una hora que el tenía que se radían teatros, una noche cualquiera no radiar el teatro y explicar que iban a someter a la audiencia un nuevo espectáculo y iban a poner un capítulo que llamaran que escribieran para ver si gustaba o no. Y entonces el cogió un capítulo de *La Serpiente Roja* y lo puso esa noche. Demás estan decir que se cayó el teléfono llamando todo el mundo llamando: ¡Que se repetieran! ¡Que lo pusieran! Y así es como sale en la ciudad de la Habana en el año de 37 el *Chan Li Po.* Es decir, la novela detectivesca. Hasta ese momento en toda Cuba en ninguna emisora se han puesto una novela, sobre todo la conocida como novela de amor. Ni siquiera el propio Caignet ha escrito más novela se ha concretado el Chan Li Po. El que a su vez lo van andando para todo la América Latina. Entonces el éxito es tal en 37 que a las ocho de la noche se para la ciudad de la Habana. Si usted caminaba por la calle se oía el episodio del chino hablando desde el momento que salió al aire.

Estuvo en el aire siete meses, a los siete meses en el Argentina, una pasta dental, le hace un contrato para llevarlo a Argentina. En ese tiempo, por aquella etapa yo era muy jóven un muchacho. Nací con el don de imitación. Yo oía a alguien hablar en la forma que fuera y allá iba yo y me salía. [...] Entonces cuando oí el episodio del Chan Li Po, yo soy taquiamecanógrafo, cojí mi papel y fui copiando el episodio y cuando terminó lo cogí y empezé yo hablar y todo el que estaba allí me dcia 'repite, repite'. Y de la noche a la mañana me convierto de una popularidad, con todo el mundo pidiéndome: 'Habla como el chino, hablo como el chino'. Y yo hablaba y hablaba y me salía identicamente igual. Fueron pasando los días. Y entonces, a los siete meses allá de estar en el aire, demás están decir yo en los clubs por aquí por allá en distintas emisoras haciendo inmitaciones del habla del chino. Entonces viene un amigo y me dice: 'Oscar yo hablé con Félix B. Caignet, le hablé de tí me dijo Félix B. Caignet que te llevara que él quería oirte.' Entonces yo fui con él a la emisora. Y cuando empecé a hablar y él me oyó se fue corriendo y entonces regresa con el director de la emisora. Cuando me oye a mí pero se impresiona mucho pasa a la oficina y me decía: 'Yo quiero hacerte una proposición'. Dice a mí '¿Tu quieres hacer el Chan Li Po?' Yo digo ¿Pero como yo haré el Chan Li Po así ya tiene su intérprete?' Y él me dice 'No, no, me rompí con el intérprete. Cuando yo regresé de la Argentina empiezo a hacer de nuevo el episodio y yo necesito que tu haces el chino.'

Entonces, cuando regresó me llamó por teléfono: 'Oscar ven por acá.' Yo me fui por allá y así fue como yo empecé en el año 38 a hacer aquí el Chan Li Po. Entonces yo lo hago durante tres años, hasta 1941.

¿Y cómo fue?

El impacto fue tremendo. Al extremo tal que lo hacía primeramente salió por otra emisora, haciendo el mismo chino escribiendo otra autor, y a los ocho meses se botó del aire porque no oía a nadie, lo que oía era a mí a que escribí Caignet. A partir de ese momento del año 38 durante tres años el programa policíaca se inicia con el Chan Li Po y igual que en Santiago surgen una seria de inmitadores pero siempre tratando de hacer cosas cómicas. Pero sucedió algo muy interesante. Aquí había un publicista de mucha agilidad mental. Se le occurre en el año 38 en un programa radial poner la novela radial,

y el le pone el nombre 'novela-radial o radio-novela'. Le explica al público que le digan qué novela quieren oir. El público escribe lo que prefiere cada uno. Entonces esa novela en media hora hace una síntesis y la pone. Yo diría que más que novela lo que salía al aire era una sinopsis pero así empezó. Y fue un escándalo. Y luego empezó a ponerlo tres veces a la semana en capítulos. Entonces ya estaba dando forma a la radio-novela. A partir de ese momento empieza la gente a escribir novelas para la radio y entre ellos es Félix B. Caignet que en el propio año 41 en que se termina el Chan Li Po del aire, el hace ya su primera novela de amor. Ultimamente se produjeron una novela que salía cada día, de lunes a viernes que se llamaba *La novela del aire.*

¿Fueron exitosas?

Una serie de novelas enormes. Al extremo que al medianos de la década de los cuarenta en la Habana había alrededor de 25 o 30 novelas en el aire.

¿Alugnos de ellas policíacas?

No, con la desaparación de Chan Li Po, no. Yo quería hacer cosas distintas, quería dirigir y no lo hizó más. Ya con el tiempo pasaron años esporadicamente surgía un programa policíaco. Un ejemplo, podía transmitirse Sherlock Holmes, y en otro momento Ellery Queen. Quiere decir que cuando triunfó la revolución los programas policíacos se hacen esporádicamente. Y a partir del triunfo de la revolución se pone un programa practicamente fijo donde el argumento, donde el caso propiamente se lo da a la seguridad del estado. Y sigue todavia en el aire. Se llama *Clave 830.* Hay otra hora en que hacen adaptaciones. Entonces siguen produciendo policíacos por la radio. No con la popularidad que tenía Chan Li Po, pero con su audiencia.

¿El *Clave 830* está producido por el Misterio del Interior?

El material es un caso verídico. El autor se tiene que regir por eso. No puede hacer por la libre.

Supongo que eso produce un tipo de detective muy diferente a Chan Li Po. ¿Qué tipo de detective fue Chan Li Po?

Un dato curioso. A Félix B Caignet se le ocurre hacer el Chan Li Po oyendo a Charlie Chan. Charlie era monotemático. O sea empezaba y terminaba una vez a la semana y entraba aquí en la Habana facilmente. Y él se le occurrió ¿por qué no hago con un Chino de Cuba? Hasta entonces siempre han hecho en la radio chinos cómicos y a él se le ocurre hacer un chino serio. Luego un día me preguntó: 'Oscar qué te parece pensándome en Sherlock Holmes que tiene Watson como ayudante que ¿por qué no le ponemos un ayudante al Chan Li Po?' Decía: 'Bueno, pero ayudante de qué tipo?' Dice: 'Ponemos un chinito, jovencito, muy enamorado y que esto le daría una variante tremenda. Pero usted tendría que ensenarlo.' Entonces me trajó un muchacho. Yo le calculé el muchacho tenía 15 años. Entonces me senté con el muchacho empecé, enseñandolo.

¿*Chan Li Po* era basada en Cuba?

No, podía ser que hay capítulos que puede ser en cualquier país, nunca en Cuba. No, afuera. No en Cuba.

¿Por qué se acabo en 41?

Yo como protagonista quería hacer otra cosas y así que na había nadie que pudiera seguir haciendo la voz como yo. El éxito de *El derecho de nacer* fue tal que le hice miles de pesos que ya él no hizo más detectivescas.

¿Pero hizo una película de *La serpiente roja*, no?

Aquí, esa película es de aquí, esa película, que es la primera película de largomentraje que se hizo en Cuba. La primera la hace él. Después de eso, crea un estudio de hacer película. Pero Mexico lo llama, y en México se fue y pasó por televisión. Finalmente se fue a vivir en Mexico. Después de la revolución no regresó.

Muchas gracias.

Gracias a usted.

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Nivel juvenil

Appendix 4

Leonardo Padura Fuentes (b. Havana 1955)

Curriculum vitae

1980: Graduate in philology from University of Havana
1980-83: Journalist on *Caimán barbudo* magazine.
1983-89: Journalist on *Juventud rebelde* newspaper.
1989-95: Chief sub-editor on *La Gaceta de Cuba* magazine.
1995-Onwards: Freelance editor, writer, author.

Prizes for journalism (awarding body in brackets)
1985 and 1988: 26th July Literary Criticism prize (Union of Cuban Journalists)
1988: First mention in the José Martí Prize for Latin American Journalism (Prensa Latina).
1988: Winner of the best article category in the Mirta Aguirre Awards (Cuban Ministry of Culture).

Prizes as author, novelist and essayist
1981 and 1982: Mentions for short stories in the David Awards for unpublished auhtors. (Cuban Union of Artists and Writers)
1982: Mention in the essay category of the Latin American Awards. (*Plural* magazine, Mexico)
1985: Winner of the essay prize in the 13th March Awards. (University of Havana)
1988: Winner of the essay prize *El Caimán barbudo* magazine.
1988: Winner of the short story prize in the 80th Anniversay Awards of *Bohemia* magazine.
1989: Mention in the short story category of the Latin American Awards (*Plural* magazine, Mexico)
1993: Winner of the Alejo Carpentier Special Prize for the essay *Un camino de medio siglo: Carpentier y la narrativa de lo real maravilloso*
1993: Winner of the Cirilo Villaverde national prize for the best novel for *Vientos de cuaresma.* (Cuban Union of Writers and Artists)
1993 Winner of the essay prize in the Latin American Awards for *Lo real maravilloso y el realismo mágico: un prólogo, dos estéticas, otro deslinde.*
1995: Winner of the International Prize Café Gijón for the novel *Máscaras*(Spain).
1996: Winner of the Critics' prize for Cuban edition of *Pasado perfecto.* (Cuba)
1997: Winner of the Hammett prize for the best thriller in Spanish for *Máscaras.* (International Association of Crime Writers)

Books as author:
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Books as editor
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